

THE
ACTS
OF
JESUS CHRIST

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF ACTS

by
Paul Ferguson

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THE ACTS OF JESUS CHRIST
THROUGH HIS APOSTLES

A Course on the Book of Acts
Prepared for use by the
students at

CENTRAL APOSTOLIC CORRESPONDENCE COLLEGE

by
Paul Ferguson, B.S., M.A., M.Div.

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INTRODUCTION

Over seventy years have passed now since the Lord saw fit to restore the original Pentecostal experience and doctrine on a large scale. One may then well wonder why Pentecostals have never in all this time produced a serious doctrinal commentary on so important a book as the Acts of the Apostles! Do our Bible Colleges actually have a serious analysis course on the book of Acts? If they do, it might be asked, what is the textbook which they use? Is it written by a Oneness Pentecostal?

Acts is the book of beginnings. It is the book of Genesis as far as church history is concerned. In Matt. 16:18 the church is still future. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." The word "church" is used many times in the New Testament but only 2x does it appear before the book of Acts. (in Matt. 18:17 and 16:18)

It is true the kingdom of heaven is preached and all men pressed into it (Luke 16:16), but the kingdom does not come with power until the day of Pentecost. (Mark 9:1) Jesus said, "There are some standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God coming with power." This cannot refer to John alone who saw the coming of Christ on Patmos. There are more than one who will see this event. The only powerful coming event in the lifetime of the disciples took place on the day of Pentecost.

Baptism in Jesus' name begins on the day of Pentecost. Those who received John's baptism must be rebaptized. Of course it is realized that some deny this was water baptism in Acts 19:5 but this will be dealt with when the time comes.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost begins in the book of Acts. John 7:38,39 says literally, "The Holy Ghost was not yet." Jesus spoke of rivers of living water flowing out of the believer. Probably we should add the words "available to all men" to vs. 39 so as to say, "The Holy Ghost was not yet available to all". Jesus insisted that if He didn't go away the Holy Ghost would not come. (John 16:7).

The Rabbis believed that the Lord would not give the Spirit to men until the Messiah came. This probably explains the statement of John's disciples in Acts 19:2. They certainly had heard that God had a Spirit, but they had not heard that the Spirit was being given out freely to all men who would receive it.

The book of Acts has the beginning of the fulfillment of the great commission. In fact Acts 1:8 has an outline of the book. It says ye shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and in the uttermost parts of the earth. Chapters 1-7 are mainly concerned with Jerusalem. Chapter 8 covers Samaria and the rest of the book begins to move toward the uttermost parts of the earth.

The Great Commission

Since the background to understanding Acts is necessary in any commentary, it will be necessary to study the last words of Christ after His resurrection in all four gospels.

Matthew. Twice it was told to disciples that they should go to Galilee to hear important words from Jesus. The angel told the women at the tomb that Jesus was going before them to Galilee (28:7). This indicated that they too were in on this meeting. Later Jesus Himself met them and bade them convey this message to the disciples also. "Go announce to my disciples that they go into Galilee and there they shall see me." (v.10)

Verse 16 tells us that the disciples went to this meeting. It omits their unbelief. An actual, personal appearance of Jesus was necessary to get them to this meeting. This scene takes place on a mountain top.

After explaining that He now has unlimited authority, He says, "Go therefore and teach (or "make disciples of") all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to keep all things which I commanded you."

These words are very much like the Lord's statement in the Olivet discourse. Mt. 24:14 says, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the inhabited world for a witness of all the nations and then shall the end come." Well has the end come yet? Obviously not. This then is proof that the final words of Jesus are addressed to many more than just the eleven disciples. They are addressed to all of us too.

Transportation was not such that various nations such as American Indians, Australian aborigines, Eskimoes, etc. could be reached by the eleven. The great commission is applicable to our own time!!!!

They were to baptize them "into the name" (not "names")....The Greek in this passage is different from "in the name" in Acts 2:38. Bauer's Lexicon says this means "the one who is baptized becomes the possession of and come under the protection of the ONE whose name he bears..." (p.575) (Greek: baptizontes eis to onoma) The Greek for "in the name" (eis to onoma) in Acts 2:38 is translated by Bauer "be baptized...while naming the name". (p.576)

The fact that no one was baptized in the book of Acts with this traditional, long formula suggests that the Lord was not giving the formula here at all.

Many of us forget sometimes that teaching as well as preaching is associated with the great commission. Some are only interested in open air evangelistic campaigns. These alone cannot fulfill the great commission. Without teaching the job is left undone.

He ends the commission by saying, "And behold I'm going to be with you all the days until the end of the age." (v.20) "Even" is not in the Greek text. Of course the age has not ended. This indicates that the Lord was talking to more than just the eleven. His words were directed to believers of all ages in which the gospel would be preached. The "you" here refers to all believers in all ages.

"With" is the Greek word "meta" and is defined by Bauer as "to help someone, stand by". (p.510) Mark 16:20 furnishes further ideas about this help. In Acts 10:28 we read that Christ did miracles because "God was with (meta) Him." In Acts 11:21 the hand of the Lord was with the church at Antioch and they grew in number. Paul uses the word to describe the things which God did "with them" on the first missionary journey. (Acts 14:27; 15:4) "With" is used in the sense of protection in Acts 18:10.

The fact that Christ will be with them to the end of the age is of special interest when compared with passages in John about the coming of the Comforter. (see John 14:16-18)

Mark 16:7 records the same direction to go to Galilee. Verse 11 tells us that the disciples did not believe this report by the women. It goes on to tell of Christ's appearance to two disciples in "another form". (v.12). These also did not believe.

Finally Christ appeared to the eleven and reproved them for their unbelief. (v.14) This was presumably in Jerusalem. If they had went to Galilee the Lord would not have had to reprove them for not believing.

"And He said to them (the eleven) Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (v.15) Here again we must remember the words of Christ in Matt 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the inhabited world for a witness to all the nations and then shall the end come." Therefore the words of Christ in Mark 16:15 and the following verses are for all believers all throughout the gospel age right up to the writing of this book.

Verse 16 says "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned." How different is our Lord's attitude toward water baptism than that of much of the religious world today! The general trend is rather, "He that believeth and is saved, we will baptize on Easter Sunday."

Whatever one's view towards water baptism, he will certainly acknowledge that verse 16 is a condition lasting throughout the gospel age. He will also acknowledge that the preaching in verse 15 is to last throughout the gospel era. Therefore it is surprising that some have tried to make verses 17 on to refer only to the apostolic age!

✓ "AND these signs shall follow them that believe in my name they shall cast out demons, they shall speak with new tongues." Note that the believers are plural in this verse because no one believer is required to do all these things but believers will do them as a group.

✓ Note also that signs will follow believers; believers will not follow after signs! V.E. Howard has suggested that "these signs" refer to recorded signs in the Bible which of course follow believers today. However the signs are only listed here. No signs are actually historically described as specific cases as Howard's theory would require. Moreover there is no example in the Bible of anyone ever drinking a deadly thing. These are rather things which believers in the gospel age will be doing. Actually Mr. Howard's "argument" is such that to state it is to answer it!

Who are them that believe? Obviously they are the same who are mentioned in verse 16 who were baptized. It did not say "them that believe in the first century." Believers are only limited by the phrase "and are baptized" in verse 16. To limit what God has left unlimited is clearly adding to the word of God and leaves one directly open to the plagues in Rev. 22!

All agree that preaching, believing and baptizing are to continue through the gospel age. Where did they get this information to know this? Answer: it is self evident. There are still many who do not understand the Bible though it has been written down. Men still need to be persuaded to obey it. Hence the need for preaching. Unbelief is obviously rampant. Hence the need to believe. Men still sin. Baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Hence the need for baptism. These passages did not need to say preaching, believing, baptism are to continue throughout the gospel age. This would be an insult to our intelligence!

Well then let's look at the need for miracles. There are still men who are tormented by demons (this will not be left unchallenged). There is still sickness. There are over 2800 languages. There are still snakes and deadly things. Since men knew these things were to continue, then it would not be necessary to state or add the words "throughout the gospel age". However since men knew that sickness, etc. was to continue if these signs were to pass away and only be found in a tiny fraction of the gospel age then a statement of their eminent cessation would be required or the Lord would have been automatically misleading the people.

Those who limit and put time barriers on what God has left unlimited are adding to the word of God. In fact limitations are multiplied. Instead of the simple "them that believe" some would have us believe it is "them that believe who live in the first century on whom an apostle has laid hands".

Moreover clear evidence has been cited that the last words of

Jesus in direct discourse made after the resurrection were meant for all believers throughout the gospel age. Otherwise why didn't the end come when the apostles carried out the great commission?? Why did they die before the end of the age when Jesus said He would be with them and stand by to help until the end of the age?

The truth is we apply verse 16 because we understand it and disregard verse 17 because it is foreign to us. The fact that miracles do not happen is not so much because faith is established but because unbelief reigns as Elmer Miller has pointed out.

Even noted church of Christ debater G.K. Wallace can see that the great commission "is the final commission. His commission is to last to the end of the world. As long as the world shall last, this commission will stand and this commission is the one which we are to preach." (G.K. Wallace, Denominational Dogmas, Nashville: Gospel Adv, 1956, p. 143). Yet the same man will take conditions which are to take place while the great commission is being carried out and that are connected to it by an "and", and sever them from the rest of the text.

What God has joined to the great commission by an "and" let no man put asunder! Let no man put limits on what God has left unbounded, lest he himself be bound and cast into outer darkness!!! Those whose preaching is without the signs mentioned in the great commission are not preaching the same commission Jesus gave and their converts are not the kind of believers Jesus was talking about. Church of Christ V.E. Howard is right in recognizing that all these signs were to follow throughout the gospel age. The context demands it.

Some would object and have objected by saying, "Well why don't you get you some snakes?" "And furthermore", they say, "in order to establish your proposition you must drink a jar of deadly poison!" This of course we should be doing if the Bible really teaches it.

Actually the Holy Spirit made a distinction between the kind of action to be used in drinking deadly things and handling snakes. There is a different method to be used in these actions than the other signs mentioned. The drinking of deadly things is phrased as a third class condition in Greek. This means that the Lord did not assume that they actually would drink a deadly thing but that it was a possibility that they MIGHT on accident drink something like this. No one did in the recorded Bible. Someone did pick up a snake on accident. (see Acts 28:4) No where does it say that this was a part of the worship service. The snake handling clause is not in the aorist tense but it is joined to the "drinking" clause by a very strong connector "and" (kai). Since the future tense "drink" is joined to aorist "take up" by this strong connective (kai) it is clear that an aorist type function is demanded for the verb "take up". Therefore the "taking up" was never intended to be habitual or customary but only in accidental cases and the Lord made that

as plain as He could possibly make it to His Greek speaking audience. The action of "taking up" and "drinking" is clearly limited. It is further limited by the absence of parallels to this in the book of Acts. The book of Acts shows how the apostles applied this promise and therefore how they interpreted, but the book of Acts is not necessary as the Lord limited this action in the book of Mark itself.

Someone may object that the apostles fulfilled the great commission on the basis of verse 20 which says, "And those went out and preached in all directions, the Lord working with them confirming the word with signs following." Though the King James Version says everywhere Bauer's lexicon allows "in all directions" for *pantachou*. Moreover loose word order in Greek allows "Everywhere they preached the Lord worked with them...." (Bauer, p. 613)

Others may cite Col. 1:23 as evidence that the gospel was preached to every creature in Paul's day. First it must be said that the verb "preach" in this passage may refer to future time. It is an aorist participle and may be translated "the gospel... will be preached to every creature..." More likely is that fact that the word for "every" probably should be translated "each". "The gospel was preached to each person" regardless of his race or color. Houlton Turner Grammar says that when the Greek is the way it is in Col. 1:23 it means "every in the sense of any; not every individual.... but any you please." (p. 199) Thus "the gospel was preached to any body under heaven" who wanted to listen regardless of whether he was Jew or gentile. (Col. 1:23)

Some have suggested that since the word was confirmed in 117 days it cannot be confirmed twice by us. The facts are that the word is confirmed to persons, to others, to people. (Heb 2:3,4) When we try to confirm to word we are trying to convince others of its truth. Thayer defines the Greek word *bebaio-o* as "to prove its truth". If miracle fighting preachers can confirm the word by preaching and debates then God can confirm it by miracles.

Moses worked miracles to confirm that there was no God besides Jehovah. (Deut. 4:35) Six hundred years later Elijah worked a miracle to confirm the same truth to the people of his day. (I Kings 18)

Luke. Luke adds the information that there was a larger company with the eleven. Luke 24:9 says that the women told their experience at the tomb to "the eleven and all the rest." It goes on to give details about the rebuke of the two on the road to Emmaus. These men returned to Jerusalem. There Luke 24:33 says they found "the eleven and those with them gathered together." There they were told that the Lord had appeared to Simon. Then the two who had seen the Lord on the road began to tell their experiences. While they were talking verse 36 tells us that the Lord appeared in their midst. Anything Christ said therefore was directed not simply to the eleven but to the eleven and those with them (v. 33).

Luke tells us later that 120 people were with the eleven.(Acts 1:15)

Christ told the eleven and those with them that the reason for His death and resurrection was that so "repentance and (some Gr. texts have "for") remission of sins should be preached in His name beginning at Jerusalem."(24:47) The remission of sins was later explained by Acts 2:38 to be baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. This baptism will follow true repentance.

The preaching is to begin at Jerusalem and extend to all the nations.(v.47) This has probably not even been fulfilled in our own day much less in the apostles.

Luke 24:48 says,"You are witnesses of these things."In so speaking He addressed not only the eleven and those with them but also the entire church in every age up till now. Only the entire church as a whole would witness the preaching of the gospel to all the nations. This is important in understanding the next verse.

Luke 24:49. Jesus told the eleven and those with them and the entire church in all ages:"Behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.You (the entire group who would witness the preaching of the gospel to all nations) wait in the city until you be endured with power from on high." The Lord did not say wait in Jerusalem because He was giving directions to men of all ages.He left the name of the city out.

In ancient times the word "city" included also the land around it.(Bauer p.692) Bauer allows the translation "city-state". In other words "Don't leave the locality where the gospel came to you until you are clothed with power.The fact that the Lord left the name of the city out shows that He is addressing the church of all ages.

John. John 20:19 tells of Jesus coming through the locked doors. They were very fearful. He showed them His hands and feet as in Luke 24:38,39. In fact both these are the same accounts. It is not likely that the Lord would have to prove to them repeatedly that it was He. Therefore the disciples mentioned in verse 19 are the same group as in Luke 24:33. They were the eleven and those with them (Acts 1:15).

Jesus said to the eleven and those with them,"As the Father hath send me even so send I you."(John 20:22) Then He breathed on them. He did not breath on some differently from others as though there were different measures of the Holy Ghost as some teach. They would all receive it the same way.

In breathing on them He was trying to tell them that the Holy

Ghost was the breathe of Christ. It is unfortunate that men have tried to make Christ's breathe a separate person from Him!

As He breathed on them He said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." He then said, "Whomsoever's sins ye remit they shall be remitted and whomsoever's sins ye retain they shall be retained." The only case of men remitting sins in the book of acts is when they baptized people for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). If they thought them sincere they could baptize them if not they could refuse baptism as John did in Matt. 3:10ff.

Preacher does
the baptizing,
can't baptize
yourselves.

Also Act 22:16

John 10:24 says one person was absent. "Thomas one of the twelve .. was not with them when Jesus came." (Luke says the eleven were gathered possibly referring to Matthias as one of them if these are both identical accounts. Their testimony about the resurrection miracle was not enough. He demanded physical evidence. He demanded an investigation of the miracle requiring physical evidence. He would have to actually examine Christ's wounds to determine their depth, etc before he would believe a miracle had taken place. This is the only case of an investigation being demanded by a believer. Thomas was rebuked for this in verse 29 and has had to bear the title "doubting Thomas" for centuries.

All these signs John said were written that we might believe. But this does not mean that other signs will not be done in addition to those recorded. It is now possible that John may have been written before Acts. If these were the only signs necessary or the only God intended to give us, why did Luke record more in the book of Acts? And why were more recorded in three other gospels?

Baptism is for remission.

John 20:22, Matt. 3:10

Act 2:38

Act 10:43, 48

Act 22:16

Against Remission @ repentance

Act 22:16

9:5-12

Act 2:38

Act 10:43, 48

Title and the Nature of the Book

The book is called Acts of the Apostles. The words "apostles" is not found in the codex Siniaticus. This has led some to rename the book more properly Acts of the Holy Ghost. If re-naming is in order one should, however, follow the author and name it Acts of Jesus Christ. Luke told Theophilus that his gospel was all that Jesus began to do and teach. Therefore the book of Acts is a continuation of the Acts and teaching of Jesus Christ! This as well as Matt. 28:20 illustrate how Jesus would return to the church through His Spirit. (see my comments on John 14-16 in my Commentary on John.)

Luke describes Christ's earthly life until the day which He was taken up. Before He was taken up, He gave commandments to the apostles through the Holy Ghost. The words "through the Holy Ghost" remind us of verses such as St. John 5:19 and 7:16,17. They teach that Jesus as man could do nothing of Himself but that His doctrine came from God. (See note on Acts 10:38.) Thus we may be sure that the apostles did not follow the whims and theories of a mere human teacher but were guided by heaven above in founding the church.

This book describes the carrying out of Christ's instructions. The title "Acts of the Apostles" leads us to expect a little more than what the book actually contains. Actually the book gives us a history of two apostles: Peter and Paul. And indeed the lives of these men are not covered in every detail. When Paul comes to the fore the narrative about Peter is quickly dropped. Then the story about Paul is dropped at a very suspenseful part.

It is possible that Luke may have put out an edition of Acts for the purpose of stirring up some good public relations for Paul right before his trial with Nero. Then again Acts is not finished and it is fitting that it end abruptly. We in the twentieth century are writing our own chapters in the history of the church.

Last Words of Christ (vss 3-8)

We know from elsewhere that Christ presented Himself to more than just the apostles. From I Cor. 15:6 we know that He presented Himself to over 500 brethren. From Luke 24:33 we know that Christ discussed things and promised the Holy Ghost to the Apostles and those with them. How many of the 500 were there it does not say. The fifteenth verse in Acts one tells us that one hundred and twenty actually obeyed and went to Jerusalem.

We know some of the subjects summarized in Acts 1:3 by "the kingdom of God" from Luke 24:44ff. He told them about OT messianic prophecy. He opened their understanding so that they could understand

the Scriptures. He told them of the reason for His death and the work which He had for them.

The words of verse four suggests that Christ was eating together with them. This is described in Luke 24:38,39, but in the forty days He may have eaten with them many times. The charge not to depart from Jerusalem seems to refer to Luke 24:49.

Some have taught that the Holy Ghost is a promise not a command. But here in Acts 1:4 we read that Christ commanded them to wait for the promise. The words of Christ in John 20:22 are in the second person plural imperative. Every school boy knows that an imperative is a command. John 20:22 "Receive ye the Holy Ghost".

Note that the command not to depart from Jerusalem is not in direct discourse. All believers do not have to journey to Jerusalem to receive the Spirit. But as soon as this detail is mentioned Luke goes back to direct discourse. Note also that in Luke 24:49 the name of the city was left out when direct discourse was used. Note also that the word "tarry" in this verse is also in the imperative in Greek. They were commanded to stay until they were clothed with power from on high. This command was given to the eleven and those with them.

Obviously the reason why Luke shifts back into direct discourse is because these words about the promise were for believers of all ages up to the coming of Christ.

He reminds them of John's promise that Jesus would baptize them in the Holy Ghost. This is found in Matt. 3:11. John said, "I indeed baptize you with water....He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." He left off addressing the pharisees and was addressing his faithful, loyal congregation whom he had baptized. Note that he did not baptize the pharisees. Who were those people who were promised the baptism of the Holy Ghost?

Matt. 3:5 say "Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan went out to him and were getting baptized by him in the Jordan." (v. 5) Luke 3:16 says John made this Holy Ghost promise to all. "All" of course is limited by the fact that they would have had to have been baptized by him.

All the people of Jerusalem, Judea and around Jordan who were baptized of John were promised the Holy Ghost baptism in Matt 3:5-11. Some have suggested that because the words "and fire" are added some would be baptized with fires of hell and some would receive the Holy Ghost, i.e. the 12 apostles. But this would require John to say "or fire". Fire refers to the purifying of the Spirit. Mal. 3:2 says Christ is like a refiners fire and like a fullers soap. Isa. 4:3 says the daughters of Zion will be cleansed by the Spirit and by burning.

Every man heard them speak,
Not just men there. Women
dwelling in Jerusalem also.

The Lord turns their thoughts away from a natural kingdom to the reign by the power of the Holy Ghost in men's hearts and lives. But note that He does not say that there will never be a literal kingdom as some teach. It will come in the course of God's prophetic program. There will then be a literal, future restoration of the kingdom to Israel. (see v.6)

BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES UPON YOU AND AS A RESULT YOU SHALL BE WITNESSES OF ME IN JERUSALEM AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA AND UNTO THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH. v.8

This verse gives us an outline of the book of Acts. This book is a treatise about the progressive spreading of the gospel first at Jerusalem (Chapters 1-7) then in Judea and Samaria (8-12) and then towards the uttermost parts of the earth.

This promise of power includes far more than the 12 apostles. The uttermost parts of the earth were not then known. The farthest parts from Jerusalem are in the United States, Australia, etc. Those who are witnesses there are entitled to this promise. There was a special out pouring in Jerusalem (ch 2) and in Samaria (ch 8) and in Joppa (ch.10) and finally one recorded in Ephesus (ch.19). The book is taking us farther and farther from the origin of Christianity. Our end time revivals in the United States are no doubt a final extension of the book of Acts.

The fact that this book ends so abruptly with Paul in jail and the story seemingly unfinished cries out against those who would see the events of Acts as a special dispensation marked off from the rest of the gospel age. We today are writing our own chapters to a modern day continuation of the book of Acts.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST TO HEAVEN (vss 9-14)

This promise of power was apparently the very last thing which our Lord said to them. The words of the angels still speak to a very few who spend so much time looking up that they cannot look around and see the need and the work which needs to be done! Such people are "so heavenly minded they can be of no earthly good"!! If they had stayed on the mount waiting for the Lord to come back they would have been like the man Jesus talked about who buried a talent under the ground. (Matt 25:15ff.)

The two angels addressed them as "Men, Galileans". Some have curiously inferred from this that only the twelve apostles from Galilee were there and no women or any other non-Galileans were there. The same logic would have us believe that Peter only preached the gospel to men and Judeans (see 2:14) and thus excluded the women and people from other countries who were there. Such arguments if followed to their natural conclusion would demand only men be in the church because Jesus said "except a MAN be born again....."

Some would have us believe that the doctrine of the second com-

See Act. 3:7-12
This is a
customary
response (RAF)

ing of Christ should cause us not to make any long range plans but simply to await Christ's return in a very passive manner. These two angels were sent from the very throne room of heaven to refute such an attitude.

Some again would have us believe that there will be no literal bodily return of Christ. The Jehovah's witnesses have taught this for years. Some who referred to themselves as Pentecostal have borrowed this doctrine and began to teach that the second coming of Christ is fulfilled in some type of latter rain revival. If they were really Pentecostal however they would hear the words of the angels in verse 11.

They said, "Jesus....shall come again IN THE SAME WAY AS you saw Him going into heaven." (see Bauer's Lexicon p.835 on tropos) The going away of Christ was bodily, literal, physical, and visible. And so will the coming of Christ be according to v.11. (see also Zech. 12:10 where the Jews will actually see Christ's wounds) The reader should check the 14th chapter of Zechariah for various details of what will happen when Christ comes back to the mount of Olives. It is of passing interest to note that Zech 14:3,4 tells us that the one who returns to the mount of Olives will be Jehovah who is one and His name one. (14:9; Acts 1:12)

RETURN TO JERUSALEM (vss. 12-14)

Who were the "they" who returned. Vs. 13 says, "THEY came up into the upper room where Peter and John, etc.....were abiding." Therefore we conclude that this is a group which contains others in addition to the twelve. Verse 13 names the eleven and marks them off as a special group within those who returned from seeing Jesus.

Verse 14 tells us that this group was "continuing in prayer with women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with His brothers." The words which express the continuing in Greek are the strongest possible for expressing continuation. This was not just a special meeting. This group continued together until the day of Pentecost.

This verse actually is a direct parallel to Luke 24:53. Luke 24:22,23 states, "These also returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were CONSTANTLY (Bauer 179) in the temple blessing (some MSS read "praising and blessing") God." This group we know from Luke 24:33 were not just the eleven or the twelve. They were "the eleven and those with them."

If the brethren of Jesus are a distinct group and were not among those at Pentecost who received the Holy Ghost then we have an apostle, a writer of the Bible (Gal. 1:19, James 1:1, Jude 1) who did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This would even tend to cast some doubt on the status of these books in our canon.

The fact that Mary and her sons were marked as permanent

members of the Pentecostal group makes an interesting commentary on such doctrines as the immaculate conception of Mary and her perpetual virginity. Why did she have other sons in addition to Jesus (Mark 6). If she was immaculate why did she have to receive the Holy Ghost as well as the others. Why did she not lay hands on the others so that they could receive the Holy Spirit. Why are we not told that the apostles prayed to Mary to prevail upon Jesus to speed His promise of the Holy Spirit baptism? Why are we told that the apostles were with Mary if she is so much more important than they?

Indeed why have those who stress veneration to Mary been so slow to follow her example and receive the Holy Ghost as she did?

THE CHOOSING OF MATTHIAS (vss 15-26)

Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren and said, "Men, brethren...." Some have inferred women were not there. However it was customary in those days to address public meetings in this way. A possible reason for this is that the man represented his entire family.

Some have felt that Peter overstepped himself here and was in error in doing what he did. Those who contend in this way are in fact condemning what the Bible leaves uncondemned. They are adding to the word of God. Usually they do this in order to make Paul the twelfth apostle. They are thus working from the false artificial assumption that there is a set number of apostles.

Paul himself, whom they seek to defend, actually refuted this by speaking of the 12 as a group distinct from himself. In so doing he recognized the validity of Matthias' apostleship. The set number suffers further from the fact the James the Lord's brother was an apostle according to Paul in Gal.1:19.

We would not be given 12 verses to describe something done by the apostles of the Lord which was out of line unless there were at least some condemnation of the event in the immediate context.

When Peter said the Scripture must needs be fulfilled, he was speaking from those things Jesus had told him. The Lord had opened their understanding to the book of Psalms wherein he claims to find passages applying to Judas. How did he know they applied to Judas? According to Luke 24:44ff. he had just finished a course in the book of Psalms from the great master teacher.

Some have seen in Peter's account of Judas' death a contradiction to the gospel account which states that he went out and hanged himself. Actually Peter does not say his bursting open was the cause of his death but merely describes this? How would he fall headlong in a field. Presumably as he was thrown or fell into a mass grave for burying of the poor. (see Matt.27:8). Others have reconciled the two accounts by presuming that Judas hanged himself

at the same time as the earth quakes connected with Christ's death. The earth opened causing Judas to fall over some precipice on the property thus leading to the double account.

One thing is certain if the event was as public as Peter implies he could not have been giving wrong information. If the event was so well known that the field received its name because of it, it is not likely that a false story about his death by hanging could have originated. Variant accounts occur only when fact are not well known or are unattainable.

Peter is not speaking as an uninspired man as he has knowledge of the Scripture to back him up. He proves by the Bible that Judas needs a replacement. (v.20) Apparently there are only two who were qualified. These were chosen by vote (v.23)

At first the lot casting seems to be capricious and by chance. Actually the ancients had methods of determining whether or not God rejected both of the choices. The Lord did not answer Saul by Urim or Thumin acc. to I Sam. They did not simply force the hand of God to choose between two men neither of which God might intend to be apostles. Urim and Thumin were a form of lots as most Bible dictionaries will indicate. The fact that after prayer they did receive an answer indicates that God was in on the choosing of Matthias.

A further question which arises is whether the casting of lots is the way in which officers today should be selected. Various things point toward a "no" answer. (1) No one was ever selected in this way after the church was born on the day of Pentecost. (2) In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established. This is an isolated instance. The receiving of the Holy Ghost has made men more capable of finding God's will without such means.

Some have thought that if lots were used there would be less politics, etc. But there would be more. Lots cast by one or two would have more chance for corruption to slip in than would votes given by hundreds of Holy Ghost filled ministers. Moreover we are not lead by lots today we are lead directly by the Holy Ghost. In the OT men needed external intermediate guidance but today we have a much more intimate contact with the Lord. To say that we need lots in addition to the leading of the Holy Ghost is an affront to the Holy Ghost as well as the ministry. If ministers are not in touch with God enough to pick those who are qualified among them, then they are not qualified for the ministry. I submit to the reader that the ministry of the Pentecostal church today is well qualified and on a par with the ministry in the 1st century A.D. Thus we do not pick our ministers in a way in which ministers of the CHURCH were never selected after the church was actually born

CHAPTER TWO

THE RECEPTION OF THE HOLY GHOST (vss 1-4)

"THEY were all gathered together in the same place..." Once again we ask, "Who were THEY.?" Some have attempted to say the it since noun is the "eleven apostles" in 1:26. Thus they presume a pronoun always agrees with the nearest antecedent. This is a rule which has never existed in any language!

Try this in Acts 8:16 "THEY were baptized in Jesus name". The nearest masculine plural noun is the "Apostles" in 8:14. This then would lead us to believe that the apostles went down to Samaria and got re-baptized by Phillip. Take also I John 3:2 says, "When he shall appear" speaking of Christ. The nearest masculine, singular noun is "the Father" in verse one. Therefore our friends have conceded the issue that Jesus Christ is the Father with this rule.

Actually a pronoun refers back to the nearest POSSIBLE antecedent. The nearest possible is the 120 in 1:15. The promise of power was given to the "eleven AND those with them" (read Luke 24:33,49) The promise of power was made to all those whom John baptized. (see Matt 3:6-11)

Imagine the surprise and shock that all these would find to see that the Lord had no intention of making good his promise to them but that only the eleven were receiving the Holy Ghost!!!

According to verse two a mighty rushing wind and tongues like as of fire came down on them. Some have tried to say that if people today received the Holy Ghost they would have to receive it in this way. Thus they betray their ignorance of hermeneutics. In the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word be established! There were many things which took place when people received the Holy Ghost but the one common element was that they spoke in tongues. Note the following table outlining various things which occurred:

Acts 2	Acts 10:45	Acts 19:6
wind, fire	magnified God	prophesied
SPOKE IN TONGUES	SPOKE IN TONGUES	SPOKE IN TONGUES

The wind, the fire, the magnifying of God, the prophesying are not common elements. There is only one element which became a pattern and is established as such by three witnesses and that is SPEAKING IN TONGUES!!!!

Verse four says they were all "filled with the Holy Ghost". Some have suggested that there are different kind of fillings of the Holy Ghost. They teach that there is a miraculous and a non-

miraculous filling. One might then ask, How can you get any more into a vessel after it is filled. How can it hold anymore????? How can there be measures. There are no such thing as measures, portions or various kinds of fillings taught anywhere in the pages of God's Word.

John said in John 3:34, "God does not give the Spirit by measure." (The words "unto Him" are in *Italics* and thus absent from the Greek text!) Each and every time someone received the Holy Spirit or was FILLED with the Holy Spirit something miraculous took place. Note the following table:

<u>Name of person filled</u>	<u>miraculous effects</u>	<u>When filled</u>
John the baptist	comes in spirit and power of Elijah, miraculous prophecies (Matt. 3:10, 11; Luke 1:16ff.)	Luke 1:15
Elizabeth	miraculous prophecy	Luke 1:41
Zechariah	miraculous prophecy	Luke 1:67
Jesus	mirac. ministry	Luke 4:1
Stephen	many signs and wonders (Acts 6)	Acts 6:5
Phillip	many signs and wonders (Acts 8)	Acts 6:1ff.

Thus we can see that each and every time Luke or any other writer speaks of a "filling", he means a **MIRACULOUS** filling!! There is only one other writer who uses the term "filled with the Spirit" and that is Paul (in Eph. 5:18)

Some have sought to show that Paul was teaching a non-miraculous filling by appealing to a similar passage in Col. (3:16) which says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you...." They see in this proof that the Spirit dwells in us through the Word. Of course anyone who has ever read Ephesians and Colossians knows that they are not exactly identical but only similar in some details. They are not, like the synoptic gospels, identical occurrences of the same speeches of Paul. Thus they cannot be appealed to as a parallel passage.

In public debate I challenged a leading exponent of this view to prove that they were parallel passages like those of the synoptic gospels. He declined to do this or ever mention this as an argument again. There is simply no "such animal" as a passage that teach a non-miraculous filling.

Each time men were filled with the Holy Ghost in the Bible, God made some miraculous sign to be done through the person being filled. Luke would have thought the idea of a non-miraculous infilling as strange indeed.

REACTION OF THE CROWD(vss 5-12) Some have inferred that the apostles were preaching to the crowd in tongues. This is not the case. The preaching starts in vs.14. This was a miraculous sign which drew the crowd so that Peter could preach to them and so that His preaching could have more force behind it. As sign of course was not absolutely essential because Peter had enough Scripture to substantiate what he said then.

The dispersal of the Jews had gone far and wide. There is evidence even from archeology that Jews were spread throughout the world. The one thing which drew them together were the national feasts which many tried to get back to Jerusalem in order to celebrate. This dispersal of the Jews though seemingly cruel was getting the world ready for the reception of the gospel. The words "from every nation under heaven" of course are an exaggeration for effect as is Rom 1:8.

The people listed about 15 languages or localities. Verses 5 and 6 imply an even greater number of languages were spoken than whichever section of the crowd was being quoted in verses 10-12. Verses five and six imply that almost all the known languages of the world were being spoken at that time. This of course would not be possible if the Apostles only were speaking. They were only 12 men.

Some have suggested that the fact that the speakers are called "Galileans" in verse 7 proves they had to be the apostles. It must be pointed out that this was only one section of the crowd which said this. This is an uninspired opinion. It was based on only the part of the band which whoever said that heard. At any rate no body can prove that the 120 were not all Galileans. Christ did not have a very great following from Jerusalem. It was the center of His opposition so most of the 120 were probably Galileans.

Some have thought that it is pointless to prove all the 120 spoke in tongues because what they did has no implication for believers today and what God does through them. However, if it is admitted (and it is by some) by our opponents that the 120 did, then it is established that this is the pattern for the New Testament church. If everyone received it, then is part of our standard and guide which our opponents admit is the only rule of faith and practice and claim for the New Testament the distinction of being our only standard for worship.

As today the audience had mixed reaction. Some asked "What meaneth this?" Others mocked and said they were drunk.(vs.12) Would to God that all would approach this experience today with the query, "What is this all about?". Instead many want to classify it before they have even the most elementary, basic understanding about it. Or they will accept some one elses conclusions without even trying to hear Pentecostals state their own case!!!

INTRODUCTION TO PETER'S SERMON(verses 14-21)

Peter stood up with the eleven.(v.14) Since the "eleven" must be mentioned here as a special group, they are obviously a special, distinct group within the 120. Otherwise we would simply be told that Peter stood up with the others. These were the leaders of the early group and are thus mentioned here. The statement in no way implies that the only ones who received the Holy Ghost were the eleven.

Peter's address was a stereotyped formal one and in no way would limit the audience to men only. Some feel that because it states that "these men are not drunk" it rules out women in the group.(v.15) The reason they feel this way is that they desire to exclude the 120 from those who received the Holy Ghost. Actually there were women in the apostolic group(1:14) as well as in Peter's audience at Pentecost. (See page 13) *"men" could also be referring to the eleven who stood up with Peter in v.14.*

Peter said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (v.17) Some have sought to contradict Peter's words and flagrantly deny that Peter's quotation of Joel does not refer to the baptism of the Holy Ghost. They state that "pouring" could not refer to baptism. This of course is to deny the very usage of the Greek word for baptism. The word is used of "flooding, engulfment in debts covering by waves, etc. A root word for "baptize" is used to describe Nebuchadnezzar who was "wet" (bapto) with the dew of heaven. (Greek translation of Daniel 4:33). All of these actions are more or less consistent with the idea of pouring. A flood cannot come without the pouring of rain. A "pouring" can indeed be a baptism if enough of the water or Holy Ghost is poured out to completely immerse the subject.

In the next few paragraphs we shall analyze the quotation from the prophet Joel to which Peter made reference.(Joel 2:28-31) Any one who seeks to establish that this is not a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit baptism has the burden of proof squarely on his shoulders to establish that it is not. An artificial theory that no one but the apostles received it could never be sufficient. The fact that many of those associated with the alleged "so-called" churches of Christ have sought to say that this does not refer to the Holy Ghost baptism is very clear proof that many of them recognize full well the clear proof that whatever those verses are referring to continues throughout the NT era and is indeed for believers today.

In developing comments on Joel 2:28ff, the clear import shall be emphasized that they tell us of an experience freely available to believers today. The following are some phrases from Peter's words:

IN THE LAST DAYS.... These words always describe conditions which extend THROUGHOUT the last days. consider a verse such as Isaiah 2:2 "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be ENDURING...." (or the Hebrew might read "shall be in an establish-

ed state") Are we to believe that the mountain (if it be the church as so-called churches of Christ affirm) endured only during the first hundred years of the last days or is it yet enduring? Take the verse, Luke 17:26. It states, "As it was in the days of Noah thus shall it be in the days of the Son of man. They were eating and drinking, marrying, giving in marriage until the day Noah entered into the ark...." Are we to believe that eating and drinking were only for the the first few years of the apostolic age? Are we to believe that marriage was for the days of the apostles only?

Actually modern day miracle fighters must say this to be consistent. How can one go to I corinthians and say that certain principles regulating marriage are binding and continue for believers today (I Cor. 7) while regulations concerning gifts of the Spirit in chapters 12-14 ceased!!!

Many more examples could be given to sustain what should have been obvious without examples, but we will list only one more. Consider II Tim. 3:1-5. We are told "in the last days difficult times shall be present (only in 1 AD????)...men shall be lovers of themselves, lovers of money (in 1 AD only?)...having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." In public debate with author and radio speaker Ray Ferris the author affirmed that the Holy Spirit was for believers today. He presented this line of argument. He stated that he wondered who it was that would be denying the power tonight. Mr. Ferris stated that he did not have time to deal with this (in one full hour of speaking!) but that there was an answer to it and anyone who came to him in private would be told what it was. Presumably this minister who claimed he was working with the Church of Christ spent many a Bible study after the debate straightening his folks out on this point!!!!

I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT.... Church of Christ (so called) James Tuten has preserved for us the following quotation from the great Hebrew scholar Theodore Laetsch. Laetsch comments on the Hebrew tense of the word pour in Joel 2:28 and says, "Imperfect of progressive duration denotes the ever-present outpouring on generation after generation." (from Laetsch's Commentary on the Minor Prophets in loco. as quoted by Jimmy Tuten in Class Notes on the Holy Spirit p. 14. This point was used in two separate debates with ministers who said they represented the Churches of Christ. (once where Mr. Tuten himself was moderator) No reply whatsoever was made!!! In the last debate Tuten and company had almost a full year to study out an answer to the point yet once again silence reigned supreme!

The idea was that if the outpouring had been only temporary the imperfect tense would not have been used. The Hebrew language had a prophetic perfect which would have described the kind of language our friends who think they represent the Churches of Christ would like to find in Joel 2:23.

UPON ALL FLESH...Some(no names mentioned) have claimed that the words "upon all flesh" refer to the twelve apostles as representatives of the Jews and Cornelius as a representative of the gentiles. This would of course have some plausibility if Peter had said "all kinds of flesh". But of course he failed to say this.

I called his attention to all those passages in the Bible which use the expression "all flesh". For instance when Gen 6:12,13 says the "end of ALL FLESH has come" does that mean 24 people?? When Isa.40:5,6 says, "ALL FLESH IS grass", does this mean twenty four people are grass???? I asked this of Mr. Ferris but once again he ran out of time!!!!

Other would-be interpreters have said that because Joel 2:28 says upon all flesh, all flesh will be saved. But we must remember that all flesh will not receive it. Some resist it. It goes off them like water off a duck's back.

Verse 18 speaks of hand maids who were in on Joel's prophecy. This is a very interesting refutation of the teaching that states that only men, (i.e. the 12 apostles) receive Joel's experience.

It is verses 19 and 20 which really drive home the point that Joel's prophecy continues right up to the end of the age. Verse 20 (which is also Joel 2:31) says, "Then(next)...the sun shall be turned to darkness before the great day of the Lord comes."

Notice I have translated the beginning word of this verse as "then". In Hebrew this word is called a "waw-consecutive". According to the Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon when "waw consecutive" follows expressions of time (like "in the last days") it should be translated "then". (p.254) According to Webster "then" means "immediately, next".

Thus Peter and Joel are saying that the next event in time after the outpourings of the Holy Spirit is the sun turning to darkness. We know from Matt. 24 that this will take place at the coming of Christ. (24:29,30) Thus the outpourings will continue till the coming of Christ.

Actually one does not need to know Hebrew to see this. If Peter does not mean to say this then he had no business whatsoever in citing this part of Joel's prophecy. It had nothing at all to do

with the outpourings of the Holy Spirit. He misapplied the passage unless he was trying to warn his audience that the coming of Christ would immediately follow the cessation of the Holy Spirit outpourings.

Compare how Jesus preached at Nazareth in Luke 4. He was quoting from Isaiah 61:1 and listing a series of topics. But he broke off and did not finish the verse. He left out the words "the day of vengeance of our God" because it did not immediately follow his ministry.

MAIN BODY OF PETER'S SERMON (vss 22-36)

Christ's life and death (vss. 22-23)

Christ was "approved of God among you by miracles, signs, & wonders which God did through Him in your midst" (v. 22). Some have laid the stress on the word "approved". Jesus, they say, is already approved by miracles. Are we unbelievers so as to seek additional proof beyond that given in the Bible. According to this theory the apostles should never have worked any miracles to give proof to men of the fact of the living Christ! But note Acts 4:33 tells us that some time later that the apostles were still giving witness by signs and wonders of the resurrection of Christ. If Acts 2:22 is supposed to refute miracles being wrought as witness to Christ then Acts 2:22 refutes Acts 4:33. I called this to my friends attention in our debate but he did not have sufficient time to answer it.

(On the thought of the words "through Him" indicating that Christ is a separate person from God see note on Acts 10:38 and also the author's commentary on John verses 5:19, 14:10, etc.)

Confirm

Actually Peter laid stress on the words "in your midst" and "among you". The word is confirmed to others, to other beings. (see Mark 16:20) It is confirmed to people. We still have people, others, other beings to which the word needs confirming and hence we still need miracles. Peter did not mean Christ was approved by these miracles to every man, woman and child who would ever live on the earth otherwise all the miracles in the book of Acts and elsewhere in the NT would be illegal and fraudulent!!!

"This one was delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God..." Christ's death was not accident. It was in the eternal decrees of God. It was God's plan of redemption for a lost and dying race. God gave His Son but the Son given was also the everlasting Father. (Isa. 9:6) This verse of course is referring to the human nature of Christ as the lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8) There is nothing that teaches of an eternal council of the members of the Trinity. It is the council of one person and one person alone which decides the fate of Jesus.

The resurrection and exaltation of Christ.(vss.24-36) Peter states the fact of the resurrection in verse 24.What he states he first proves by the Bible.Amiracle is not needed to validate Christ's resurrection. There are reliable witnesses and there is proof from the Bible. Thus when our friends say that miracles are not needed because we have the written word, the reply is that they were not needed then because they could prove Christ was the messiah by the Bible then.

Some may say, "Doesn't that prove two persons? One raised His Son from the dead." What they forget is that Jesus said,"I will raise (my body) from the dead."(John 2:19-22) The resurrection refers to the resurrection of Christ's body. Jesus as God did not die.

Peter quotes Ps.137 to prove the resurrection. David distinguishes between himself and Christ. He says,"Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades...." David's soul was presumably taken to heaven after the resurrection of Christ. But he adds,"not wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." This is very different from an indestructable soul not being left in Hades which will one day deliver up all the dead in it.(Rev.20:11-15) This part of the verse had to refer to Christ and could not possibly refer to David.

Peter further develops this theme by referring to Ps.132:11 where it was prophesied that the "fruit of his (David's) loins" would sit on his throne. Some teach, such as the Jehovah's witnesses that as far as Christ's human nature is concerned He is dead as a door nail. Pastor Russel taught that Christ's body probably dissolved into gases. This would make God's words to David about the fruit of his loins just a joke. According to Jehovah's witnesses the fruit of David's loins is no more. Thus they confess that they are not after all Jehovah's witnesses or they would teach what Jehovah taught about the human nature of Jesus!

The exaltation of Christ(vss 33-36) Verse 33 says Christ was exalted by the right hand of God. Any exaltation refers to the human nature of Christ and not to His Divinity. If Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equal one cannot exalt the other any higher. Jesus Himself said a teacher could not rise above his master,as God Jesus is "Lord of all"(Acts 10:36) but as a man in the flesh He needed to be exalted. As God we are "complete in Him" who is the head of ALL (how much???)"principality and power".(Col 2:10)

The words "right hand" of course are figurative of power as in Ex.15,etc. No literal right hand came out of heaven when Christ was exalted, but He was raised into heaven by the invisible power of God.(Acts 1:11)

Peter goes on to say that Jesus received the promise of the Spirit. But our friends will once again be hard pressed to extract a separate Divine person from all of this. In what sense did Jesus need the promise of the Spirit. (cf. Luke 4:14) In what way did He need to go about in the "power of the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 4:14)? Does this refer to Jesus as God? What kind of pitiful, emasculated Divinity does this give Christ. How can two persons be equal and yet one need the other before He can work a miracle. (John 5:19)

As man Christ received the Holy Ghost but as God verse 33 tells us that He poured it out. According to Joel 2:27 the one who poured out the Holy Ghost said, "I am God and there is none else." This is undeniable Christ! What on earth did the other two persons think when Christ said, "I am God and there is none else."?????

Peter goes on to prove Christ's ascension and glorification by quoting Ps. 110:1 where God said, "The Lord said to my Lord..." This refers to the communication of the flesh and Spirit of Christ. Christ was a man in all points like as we are yet without sin. Heb. 2:17. Thus He had a human brain and a human center of consciousness. Those who deny the communion of the flesh and the Spirit of Christ deny that He had a real human nature.

"Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool." It is Christ alone who defeats the nations in Rev. 19:11ff. It is He alone who comes seated on the right hand of the power of God. (Luke 22:69) Ps. 110 refers to the fact that as man Christ cannot defeat the nations and needs the power of God. If a separate person from Christ will defeat the nations we may well wonder why he does not show up in Rev. 19 and Isa 63:1-5.

Verse 36 tells us that God made Jesus "both Lord and Christ." Some teach that this not only proves two persons but it also proves that Christ was the adopted Son of God. Actually it proves neither of the two. Jesus as God was both Lord and Christ when His flesh experienced human birth (see Luke 2:11) According to Bauer's lexicon p. 688 the word here translated "make" can refer to an already existing fact made fully public to all men. (cf. also St. John 5:18) In what sense was Jesus already Lord and in what sense did He have to be MADE Lord??????? There is only one possible answer!!!!

The reaction and conclusion to Peter's sermon (vss 37-42)

"When they heard this, they were stupified." (Bauer p. 415) The Greek word means "pierce or stab" They felt a sharp pain in their heart. They knew that the national guilt of Christ's death would be upon them. None besides the Jews in the ancient world could better understand the idea of national, corporate guilt. Rev. 1:8 (Zech 12:10) says they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced. Though the Romans pierced Jesus, Jews are dealt with in the same way as if they did the piercing.

Such a sense of sin and guilt is rare in many places in our day. Great men of the past such as Luther, Bunyon, Milton sensed it, but today a confessed sinner is hard to find. Thank God for the convicting power of the Holy Ghost.

Note that there was emotion involved in their conversion. It was not just an intellectual receiving of the word in their minds. There was a strong, piercing emotion not just a little crocodile tear and a little bowing of the head we are too familiar with!!! A mere piercing of the intellect would never have brought the multitude to repentance. It had to get to their heart!

When it did, they asked, "What should we do?" What a chance for Peter to work in his doctrine of "easy-believism"! They had already confessed that they were guilty of Peter's charges. They recognized their sin. They confessed it with their mouth by this question. They had accepted that Jesus was the messiah and that he rose from the dead.

According to much of the religious world Peter should have said, "DO???????? Why you don't do anything. Christ did it all! Just believe and you'll coast right into glory." How often are we chided for preaching a doctrine of works! Peter's very own words in the next verse prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that there is a response on people's part. There is something we must do. The following is an analysis of the steps which Peter outlined:

REPENT: It means literally "change your mind". (meta + noeō) But the noema is more than intellect. It refers to the whole person. Bauer defines it as "purpose, design." It implies a total change in the life style of the individual. The whole man must repent and be given to God. For a deeper analysis of this word Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the NT is one of the best sources. It is not just a man's mind that repents. He repents with every fibre of being which he possesses. Those who refuse baptism confess they they have only a superficial, intellectual repentance and that it does not cover their outer man and thus is deficient in the inner man as well! They do not have the same kind of repentance Peter had or they would do what Peter taught.

BE BAPTIZED. i.e. immersed. This is the usual meaning of the word to a Greek. The Greek church never bought sprinkling from the Pope. This would be like saying, "Were you immersed by sprinkling or by pouring?" "Baptized" is in the passive voice. This is probably why many will not submit to baptism. They do not want to come under any authority or be passive in any way. If it was some great work that they did, like Hamaan of old, they would be way out in front. Being plunged under the water goes against the grain of old man flesh which like a cat does not like to get wet. The subject of baptism by immersion will be more fully discussed in the Theology course on the church.

EACH ONE OF YOU- But today this has been changed to "those of you who feel so disposed," or "if that's your conviction." He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" has been turned around to read "He that is saved, we shall baptize Easter Sunday weather permitting."

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST... No one doubts that when we repent we use the name of Jesus. No one doubts that when we pray or when we preach, we use the name of Jesus, but when we baptize it is a different story. No name. Every preacher for centuries when he said, "I baptize in the name of...." meant that he actually called the name. But today we are told by many moderns that "in the name" means anything else besides actually calling the name over the candidate. This topic is covered in detail in the course on Pentecostal doctrine and was treated in some respect in the comments on Matt. 28:19.

FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS... This has been changed to "for the fun of it." We are told that this means "because your sins have been remitted." One of the verses used to prove that the Greek expression here means "because of" is where the people repented "at or into(eis) the preaching of Jona". This is supposed to be a causal use of "eis". ("eis" is translated "for" in Acts 2:38). Actually "eis" shows RESULT in Matt. 12:41. They repented not because of but "as a result of" the preaching of Jona. Result is an ordinary use of "eis". The meaning "because" is controversial (Bauer 229). We should not insert a controversial, doubtful meaning when an ordinary, well established meaning would do just as well.

The full Greek expression translated "For the remission of sins" is eis aphesin hamartion. The exact same expression is used in Matt. 26:28. We are told Christ's blood is to be shed "for the remission of sins." Are we to believe Christ's blood was shed BECAUSE our sins were already remitted? We have one set of rules which apparently apply to Matt. 26:28 but which do not apply to Acts 2:38! More will be said about this in the Theology course on salvation.

AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST. "Shall" does not necessarily demand that the receiving HAS to be simultaneous with the baptizing in each and every case. There may be things which the individual has not given up then or the individual's life may not yet be yielded so as to allow the Spirit to come in in the baptismal measure. The Holy Spirit is a gentleman. John 3:34 says "God does not give the Spirit with measure", but nowhere does it say God gives it with a "ram rod".

One thing is certain if someone has the repentance of the WHOLE MAN and the baptism Peter was talking about He will receive the Holy Ghost in the water speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. Those who have not yet received this experience would do well to examine their repentance and their baptism.

There are those who would have us to believe that there are different kinds of gifts of the Holy Ghost. There is a miraculous and a non-miraculous gift. Luke would have been surprised about this. He never uses "gift of the Holy Ghost" in any other sense than a miraculous, supernatural measure. (see 10:45; 8:20; 11:15,17)

The only passage left is Acts 2:38. This lone, single passage we are told talks about a non-miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost. The reason they believe this is because v.39 tells us everyone can receive it. They either have to admit we all can get it or some how sneak it out of the passage. To do this they invent a man made idea of a non-miraculous measure of the Holy Ghost. I called this to an opponent's attention in public debate. His only reply was "if Mr. Ferguson brings that up again I'll answer it." It was brought up again of course without reply except my opponent bade anyone in the audience who was interested to see him in private for an explanation. I do not know if anyone accepted this invitation.

THE PROMISE IS UNTO YOU... What promise? Acts-Luke knows only of a miraculous promise of power. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4) The only gift mentioned in the context was the pouring out of the Spirit according to Acts 2:4 (see Acts 2:17)

AND TO YOUR CHILDREN... This was 33 AD. An infant living there could have gotten this promise when he was 90 or 100 in 33 A.D. Yet we are told that there was no Holy Ghost baptism after 65AD by some would-be evangelists.

AND TO ALL THAT ARE AFAR OFF... Parallelism demands afar off in time stretching right into the 20th century. Bauer's lexicon allows this interpretation for eis makran.

EVEN AS MANY AS THE LORD OUR GOD SHALL CALLED. This is the whole earth (Ps. 50:1) He calls by the gospel which is to every creature in the NT age! (II Thes 2:14; Mark 16:15)

verse 40: "With MANY other words...." Some believe Acts 2:38 is the end of the road when it's really just the beginning.

verse 41: As many as received the word were baptized... "Note how the receiving of the word is connected with baptism.

Verse 42: "They were all continuing in the apostles doctrine" The Greek here suggests continuous, unending action. This is the strongest way they could put it. Not just on Sunday and Wednesday night but 24 hours a day.

"and fellowship". They did not go home and say, "I won't follow any man. I can get just as close to God out on the golf course as in church." They needed the fellowship of brethren as bad as they needed the doctrine.

They also continued in breaking of bread. This was probably not referring to a regular Sunday morning observance of the Lord's Supper. The only other place where this exact wording is used is Luke 24:35. This is referring to an ordinary meal which the Lord had with His disciples. This may have referred to a "love feast" which was celebrated by the early church. The fellowship of early members was closer than family ties.

Finally, they all continued in prayer. All these things must be in balance to be apostolic: Doctrine, fellowship, sharing, and prayer. All must be regularly included in the church.

Every soul had a godly reverence or fear. And signs and wonders were done. Many in our time want to have signs and wonders and yet have little if any respect for authority.

Verse 45 tells of a common fund. Everyone was selling his possessions and giving them to the common treasury. The following items should be kept in mind about this custom:

1. This was voluntary and unsolicited.
2. There were requirements to get this aid. (II Thes 3, I Tim. 5)
3. All property would soon be valueless as the Romans were soon to come in and destroy everything.
4. The custom does not seem to have been practiced outside of Jerusalem.
5. No one contributed to Social Security in those days.
6. In an atmosphere of persecution all real estate would probably eventually be confiscated.

Verse 46: "Now they were spending a great deal of time in the temple every day, and in breaking bread from house to house, sharing (their) food with glad and simple hearts,"

Verse 47: "In praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number those who were getting saved."

All their lives revolved around the church. Modern saints often think it is none of the pastor's business where they spend their time. Notice how closely revival is connected with how various members of the church get along. There was no pretentiousness...no putting on airs. They did not let one person do all the work nor did they try to "out do" each other.

CHAPTER THREE: Healing of the Lame Man

THE HEALING (vss. 1-8):

We were told in vs. 46 of the second chapter that the apostles and the early church spent a great deal of time in the temple. They continued to do this as long as they were allowed. The old system was not willingly left. It was wrong, but they continued to work within the system. All great reformers through the ages never left their churches until they were forced to.

Many in our day have the idea if everything is not like they should be (including possibly everything but the color of chairs on the platform) that they must leave the church. Such people could not possibly be the successors of the apostles and reformers or they would stay in and try to exert a godly influence until this becomes impossible.

Lame man

They stared at the lame man. They saw him every day (v. 2) But today was special. There was something about that man that caught their attention. Perhaps it was the working of the Spirit. Perhaps as Paul in Acts 14:9 they supernaturally discerned some worthy quality in him. Whatever it was it was not faith, for he expected to get a "hand out" from them.

C of C,

(1) Condemned Healers

(2) Can't heal

There is an apocryphal story of two church officials in the middle ages. One said, "Well we sure can't say, Silver and gold have I none' anyone!" The other replied thoughtfully, "No, but we can't say, 'Rise and walk' either!" Could this ever become true in our own ranks?????

There are many people today who come to our churches expecting to be entertained or just for social reasons. Like this man they receive something far more precious than gold. To help them we must notice them as did Peter. Many a hypocritical temple goer had turned away in scorn. (cf. Lk 10) Those who leave without even a handshake may rise up in the day of judgment.

We must get their attention. "Look on us", they said. (v. 4) They did not say look on Jesus. They were the representatives of the Lord. For us to expect the attention of such people our lives must have something in them worthy of it. The social gospel would teach him a trade, get him a job, help his family, but the true gospel made him walk.

emotional

When the man was healed, he did not quietly thank him and go on his way. He went into the temple with them leaping and praising God. This would have been a disgraceful show of unintelligent emotion to many of our religious moderns.

REACTION TO THE HEALING (vss 9-12)

The people were filled with amazement and excitement. The multitude began to gather. It was not because they had the "Hinging-spell Quartet" or because of a special promotion drive but a miracle of God had happened. It was something different. It was otherworldly. Someone has said, "If you get on fire for God, people will come to watch you burn!" If we had more of the power of God, we would need fewer promotion "gimmicks".

Verse 12 gives us the apostles reaction. They did not form a healing line and give everybody prayer cards. They did not bill themselves as God's men of the hour. They completely denied any credit whatsoever for this miracle. James 5:16 and 17 states how that ordinary men who have faith and righteousness may be used of God in mighty signs and wonders. The apostles did not work miracles because they had an exclusive franchise on some magical power but they had found the secret of power in the name of Jesus.

THE APOSTLE'S SERMON(vss.13-26)

Note that Peter again is the speaker. The man who a while before had been so quick to disown the Lord now became the spokesman of the group.

The first part of the sermon as usual presents the unjust murder of Christ. The opening remarks are colored by the language of Isa.52-53(52:13) which tells us of the suffering, atoning death and glorification of God's servant. Verses like Isa.53:2 remind us that this is referring to the human nature of our Lord. It is as man that He has the form of a servant(Phil.2:6) and is glorified.

Note that Peter holds them personally responsible for the act, but puts the Roman government in a much more favorable light.(v. 13) He does not spare them any mercy. He reminds them that Pilate wanted to release Jesus. He reminds them also about Barrabus. A good, God appointed minister will not hold back out of politeness or desire to build a huge congregation.

They had murdered the the Prince or originator of Life, but God raised him from the dead.(v.15). Proof of this is Isa.52:13-53:11 and actual living witnesses. A further proof is the miracle which they have just witnessed.

According to vs.16 the secret of their power is not because Jesus laid hands on them but "on the basis of faith in His name." Like the man who did not follow the disciples and Jesus, they did it "in Jesus' name" (Mark 9:38). They did not have any special power apart from other men. They were simply putting into practice the teaching about faith which they had received from Christ (Mk 11:21; Matt.21:21) We today as believers in Christ have the same potential as did Peter and John. We cannot therefore excuse ourselves from not doing similar works because we are not apostles.

Peter softens His message just a bit in the next two verses. (vs. 17, 18) They did it through ignorance and what was done was pre-announced by all the prophets. A good minister knows just how to combine sympathy and hard preaching. But this does not excuse them. They must repent.

The results of their repentance and conversion will be the wiping out of their sins. The word for the blotting out of sins in v. 19 is interesting (see Col. 1:14). It is used of whitewashing a house and washing out of a papyrus sheet so that it could be written on again.

Some would suggest that this verse ^{teaches} that merely a passive kind of repentance will do this, but the word "convert" refutes this. It means literally to "turn around and start the other way." There is no such thing as a passive repentance which rules out obedience to the commands and ordinances of God. In Scripture baptism and repentance are so joined that they are inseparable. (cf. Acts 2:38; Mark 1:4) The fact that repentance is a condition of salvation does not mean that there cannot be more conditions.

According to verse 20 another goal or purpose of repentance is that "times of refreshing (rest) might come from the presence of the Lord...." The word means literally to "bring ones soul back again, revive, restore..."/ This reminds us of the prophesied rest in Isa. 28:11 which comes with stammering lips and another tongue. It is something objective and real. It is somethings which does not just come from reading our Bibles. It comes directly from the throne room of God.

This refreshing is a foretaste of what is to come. The Lord will at some future date send Christ Jesus and restore everything to perfection. This does not mean that the Lord and Christ are two persons. Christ said, "Come unto ME and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28). There is only one Lord who is Jesus. (Acts 9:5; Eph. 4:5)

1 Cor. 13:10 → Heaven must receive Christ until the time of "restoring everything to perfection". (see Bauer, p. 92 for apokatastasis) This is what Paul is talking about when he speaks of the gifts ceasing when "THAT WHICH IS PERFECT COMES". This comes at the coming of Christ from heaven and thus gifts are still for believers today.

Some take "restoring of everything to perfection" to mean that the Devil himself and all sinfull mankind will be restored. But the verse does not stop here. It says, "everything which God spoke about through the mouth of His holy prophets." "Which" here cannot go with "restoration". It must go with "things" as it is plural. And it goes without saying that none of the holy prophets ever spoke about the Devil and Mussolini being saved.

In fact the very next verses refute such an idea. Peter quotes

Deut.18:15-18 where Moses said that anyone who would not hear the prophet God sends would be cut off from His people.

Peter goes on to prove that as seed of Abraham they have a right to receive the blessing of Christ.(v.25)"God raised His servant first then sent Him back again to bless you when each of you turns from your sins." This is speaking of the times refreshing or the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:39). This verse has a real dilemma for the Trinity doctrine. Jesus in John 14:16 spoke of sending the Holy Ghost But here in this verse it is Christ who is sent. No mention is made of the sending of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER FOUR/ARREST AND TRIAL WITH THEIR EFFECTS ON THE CHURCH.

Arrest and Trial (vs.1-21) Clarence Jordan has produce a rather amusing version of this story in his Cottonpatch Version of Luke and Acts. He portrays the story as though they were brought before the mayor of Atlanta. Though all of this book is not to be endorsed, it certainly gives an interesting version.

Despite their arrest, there were 5000 converts. Little wonder then that the officials were grieved. Their teaching was doubly repugnant as the temple officials did not even accept the doctrine of the resurrection. One cannot help but wonder how many aspiring ministers we would have if the message closed with the preacher's arrest! Times have changed!

C of C. They hated their doctrines. They did not question them about them, but they wanted to know how this miracle had been done. Apparently these defenses before the priests bore fruit as Acts 3:7 states that a great multitude of priests believed. What would this council have thought if they could have known that they not only would not stop them from teaching the people but that even their own number would soon be greatly depleted by the ministry of the disciples.

Here again it is Peter who is first to speak. Note the difference the Holy Ghost makes. This was just the situation Jesus had told them so much about during His earthly ministry.(see Lk.21:15 "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries shall be able to gainsay or resist.") Compare Luke 21:15 with Acts 4:8. His speaking each time was so persuasive that a great number of priests came to believe.

Peter's reply in 4:10 reflects his remarks in 3:16. He is still claiming no credit or special position because of this miracle. It is through the name of Jesus that the miracle was done. How different Peter's attitude is from many moderns. Apparently He did not have the benefit of a good public relations staff like some of our modern day evangelists!

The prophecy which Christ had referred to in the last verse of Matt. 21 was now fulfilled. The stone which the builders rejected was the head of the corner. Perhaps many of them were there when Christ told them about this.

Peter was even stronger in his preaching to the council than he had been with the people. He told them "neither is there salvation in any other (name). For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." It is therefore strange the little important men attach to this name. See Acts 22:16; 2:21. There is the place the name was used?? Acts 2:38 tells us. It was in water baptism to which the religious world attaches even less importance than they do the name of Jesus!!! It did not say we would be saved by it if this is our conviction. It said we MUST be saved by it!!!

They were amazed at Peter's boldness, and the liberty with which he spoke. They knew well that they were "untrained, illiterate men." (v. 13) They were amazed knowing full well that they had been with Jesus. What seminary training could not give them being with Jesus did. Apparently however Peter later overcame his illiterateness sometime before his epistles. This verse is not to be taken as a glorification of ignorance, nor is it an equation of ignorance with spirituality.

The officials said concerning the miracle, "We cannot deny it." Knowledge has increased since then. There are some confessed Christians who claim to have evidence that a miracle such as this could be explained by natural means. In their zeal to rid themselves forever of promises to miraculous power, they explain away all modern miracles as psychosomatic. One such blasphemer told of a man on crutches who when chased by pigs throw away his crutches and took out running. He called this "swine" healing instead of "Divine" healing. If this imposter who claimed to be a minister in the Church of Christ had been with the temple officials he would not have been as honest as they were!!

Since public opinion was so much in favor of the apostles all the officials could do was threaten them. It was then that Peter who had melted before a mere servant girl uttered those immortal words, "We must obey God rather than men." (v. 19; 5:29)

EFFECTS ON THE CHURCH....(vss. 23-37)

The Prayer Meeting (vss. 23-31)

When they were released, they returned to their own. This could not refer to the other apostles. The words "own" always refers to someone's disciples, family or servants. (see John 13:1; Acts 24:23) The effects of their report was to make them lift up their voices with one accord. They did not all together repeat some liturgical prayer which they had learned. They were in serious, dead earnest. The words "together" and "lift up" describe the Pentecostal way of praying.

The word "together" (homothumodon) does not imply that everyone said the same words. According to Bauer's Lexicon it means "with one mind or purpose or impulse". This prayer may be a composite of what all of them said or it may have been what the prayer leader said.

The opening verses of this prayer contrast the lordship and the creatorship of God, with the fact that He has spoken to His children through His Spirit. He has perfect power and wisdom and yet He has proven His interest and willingness to help in man's dilemma by providing us with a written revelation.

The prayer then quotes the opening verses of Ps. 2. (vss. 25, 26) We infer from their use of this Psalm that the words are prophetic. The "heathen" and the "people" who are in revolt are said to be those who executed Christ. They are gathered together against the "Lord and against His anointed (Christ)". At a casual reading this might seem to imply that the Lord and His anointed are two persons. This, however, is a reference to the dual natures of Christ.

According to Acts 10:38 Jesus as man was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. In what sense did He need power and in what sense did He already have it? As man of course He needed an anointing of power and as such was called Christ. As concerning His Divinity He was the mighty God and did not need an anointing with power. As to the fact that the Lord and Christ are ONE person see Luke 2:11 which says "a Savior which is Christ the Lord." Acts 2:36 "says He is both Lord and Christ". The distinction is in the Human and Divine natures. I called the to the attention of a Mr. Wayne Jackson of Stockton, Cal. He was unable to show why this interpretation would not fit in this verse nor did he even bother to try!!!!

Verse 27 spells out clearly who the individuals are in Ps. 2:1. The king is Herod. The ruler is Pontius Pilate. The people are the Jews, and the heathen are the Romans. Their actions which at first glance seem to be their victory were actually a passive enactment of the eternal decrees of God. (v. 29) They were gathered together "to do whatsoever things your hand and counsel determined to come to pass." (According to Trinitarian logic used in unravelling verse 26 for us God's "hand" and His counsel are two persons!)

Thus the elders and scribes who are against them are insignificant pawns and may be easily dealt with by the Lord of the universe. They do not ask for deliverance from them but for boldness to speak the word. (v. 29) There is no need to ask for deliverance for these people are under the watchful control of the Divine Sovereign who will not allow their authority to go beyond His prescribed bounds.

God will give them the boldness they desire by "stretching forth His hand so that healings and signs and wonders will be done, through the name of His holy child Jesus." (v.30) Why were mere members praying for signs and wonders to be done. According to some this was the special prerogative of the apostles. Moreover if the Lord left some special, magic authority in the apostles why did they not just ask the apostles to work more miracles.

All believers
could work
miracles

Instead they identified where the power lied-in the name of Jesus! All knew the name of Jesus. All could therefore work miracles in His name (Mark 16:17).

The hands of the church are actually an extension of the hands of Christ. They asked the Lord to stretch forth His hand to heal. (see Mark 16:20; Heb 2:3,4) (also Acts 11:21) Peter understood that this hand was the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. (see Acts 9:34 "Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole.") Paralleling Matt. 12:28 with Luke 11:20 will show that the Holy Ghost is the "hand of God" and that the fullness of the Godhead is in Jesus.

Verse 31 gives us the answer to this prayer. The place was shaken. God worked a genuine miracle in answer to the simple prayer of ordinary members of the church. This refutes the idea that the apostles has some special monopoly on getting their prayers answered. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost". Perhaps there were some in their midst who had been tarrying. If we still need to speak the word of God with boldness, then we also still need the experience which the NT church received! This was hardly the "non-miraculous measure" we hear so much about in some circles.

AFTER MATH OF THE PRAYER MEETING (vss 32-37)

vs.32 tells of an increasing amount of unity proportional no doubt to the increased display of the power of God. True signs and wonders will not bring division but unity. Note the further statement of community property. See 2:44

Confirm

With power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to some miracles were to confirm the word. Here is one miracle confirming another miracle. They had enough prophecy and witnesses to "confirm" to resurrection. There was the evidence of the empty tomb, but miracles were still being done!!!! Just because it says the apostles did these miracles is no sign that no one else did them.

Book is called
Acts of the Apostles
This is how
Apostles acted on
what they were
taught

Vs.35 is the first mention of Barnabus, Paul's companion. Here we are told that his name means "son of consolation." In Hebrew and Aramaic this would mean that he was a very consoling or comforting person to have around. How many of us would merit this name? What would we be called "son of"? In passing we are told that he too brought the price of a field to the apostles. Perhaps this is to contrast him with Ananias in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Ananias, Sapphira and Further Resistance

Ananias and Sapphira (vss 1-11)

This is one of the most well known stories of the book of Acts. It is not a normative experience. The only thing that even comes close to it is Elisha's experience with Gehiza where Gehiza was smitten with leprosy for lying, etc. (II Kings) Striking people dead was never put into the church as a gift. (see Acts 13:10) If it had been there might not be as many of us as there now is.

We are, however, never told that either Peter or God smote them. Perhaps the shock of the exposure caused them to have heart failure. An interesting parallel to this would be the time when the Lord refused to send fire down on the Samaritans in Lk 9:54.

Many Trinitarians are aware of the fact that the Holy Ghost in vs.3 is paralleled with God in vs.5. This, they say, means that the Holy Ghost is God. But they forget that the Greek text also parallels the Holy Ghost with "the Spirit of the Lord" in verse 9. This then should prove that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the Lord, who according to Acts 9:5 is Jesus.

Verse 4 tells us that this selling of property was voluntary and was not preached as a necessary doctrine and never intended to be a directive guideline for the church in all ages.

Many modern saints would believe it was none of the pastor's business how much they sold something for. It would thus behoove us to examine again our ideas about how much authority God gives the man of God. The effect of this incident cause great fear to fall upon everyone.

Unusual Miracles (vss 12-16) Signs and wonders were done by the apostles, but this does not mean that the apostles were the only ones who did them. It means this no more than when it says the apostles preached that they were the only ones who preached. See note on Acts 6:5.

They were holding services on Solomon's porch and no one dared join themselves to them. C.C.Torrey has an interesting theory about this in vol.65(1953) of the Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. He points out the fact that the Aramaic word "qarab" can mean "join" but also "contend with or antagonize". (p.243) Certainly a meaning such as "contend with" would fit the context a little better than join.

The apostolic miracles so raised faith in the people that they carried people into the street so that the shadow of Peter could fall on them.

Striking
People dead

Unusual
Miracles

Good
Miracles raised
Faith in People

Special
Miracles

Note that we are not told that Peter billed himself as God's man of the hour and told them to put people out in the streets like this. We are not even told that anyone was healed by the shadow of Peter. Close parallels to this are Mark 6:56 and Acts 19:12. Act 19:11 *Special Miracles - over & beyond Mark 6:56, Faith of People*

Arrest and Persecution(vss 17-42)

First imprisonment (vss 17-25) Not even prison could stop these fearless proclaimers. An angel got them out. This was undoubtedly one of the smoothest prison breaks in all history. It was so quiet that no one knew it had happened. When the "grand jury" heard about it verse 24 says they were doubting "concerning them what would happen next". Things did happen next we know, for 6:7 tells us a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

While they were mulling this over some came and announced that the men who were in jail had taken their stand in the temple(for so the Greek implies) and were teaching the people. They didn't just make a quick "pop corn" testimony and then run. The Greek text implies that they were apparently conducting a regular class.

Arrest and trial.(vss 26-42) This time they were brought to trial. The charges were filling Jerusalem with their doctrine and desiring to bring the blood of Christ upon the head of the council. If they had only known the benefits of the blood!!!!(v.28)

Peter's answer to the charge was not really a reply but another sermon. The sermon in verses 30-32 fits the pattern of all Peter's sermons in the book of Acts. This pattern also fits the structure of the book of Mark. Tradition has it that Mark was Peter's assistant and compiled the gospel from preaching notes he had taken from Peter's sermons.

Peter tells once again of the unjust death of Jesus, of His resurrection and exaltation by the hand of God.(see Acts 2:33-36). The reason for these acts of God was to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel. Christ didn't just merely die. There was an eternal reason for His death.

Again Peter gives reasons for His doctrine. There are witnesses and there are miracles wrought by the Holy Ghost.(v.32) Men witness by word of mouth but the Holy Ghost witnesses by signs and wonders (Heb 2:3,4) This "miraculous measure" of the Holy Ghost is not just given to a select few in a defunct apostolic "country club" but is given "to those who are obeying Him".(v.32)

The Jews cannot bear another message like this. They want to kill them but are stopped by a man named Gamaliel. This was the teacher of Apostle Paul. This was the man of whom it was said

Heb 2:3-4 Miracles & gifts of H.G. are the will of God, not by the will of the apostles.

with his passing that "all wisdom and knowledge perished from Israel! He was extremely well respected and demanded an audience from even these fanatical, hot tempered Jews. This was not the first nor the last time God has raised up a "friend" to his people from an unexpected source.

There have been many trouble makers, he reasoned. One may read in Flavius Josephus' Jewish Wars to see illustrations of this fact. They have always come to no good and eventually passed off the scene. Nothing can be accomplished outside the will of God, he reasons further. They are convinced.

They, however, were not convinced to the extent that they did not severely punish the disciples. They severely warned them not to speak in Jesus name. They might as well warned the wind not to blow.

This chapter closes with one of the greatest verses in the Bible(v.41) They went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name. Verse 42 tells us that every day they they were in the temple and from house to house telling the good news about Christ.

CHAPTER SIX

The Arrest of Stephen

Dispute Among the Grecians and Jews(vss 1,2)

These were days before relief, social security or public aid. Disputes generally come as numbers rise. Yet disputes are not normal in the book of Acts. This is the only one mentioned. When people are busy preaching the gospel they do not have much time to be discontented.

Some evidently felt that there was racial preference shown in giving of aid. The apostles did not deny that there had not been fairness. They were, unlike some ministers, willing to admit that things had not been run right.

Dispute settled by appointing of deacons.(vss.3-6) The only church trouble mentioned in the book of Acts lasted only 2 verses.. All the disciples were called together. It was not decided in a back room somewhere. The apostles were wise enough to know that they couldn't do God's work all by themselves.

They asked the people to select the officers. The apostles gave the qualifications and no doubt ratified the appointments. They were to have a good testimony, be full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. This suggests that all who are filled with the Holy Ghost do not necessarily also have wisdom. A pastor would do well to consider this. Also a person cannot even serve the most menial office in the church without a good testimony.

Acts 6:3 clearly teaches that the mere fact of a person's having received the Holy Ghost at some time or other does not automatically qualify him for an office in the church.

Note also that they did not draw on the Old Testament or the words of Jesus. They did not even say that they Lord told us or is guiding us to do this. A need arose and the apostles used their God-given abilities to solve it. They did not need a precedent or authority for what they did. *Instrumental music, No so called authority either.*

Note also that the people were not envious of the apostles giving themselves only to the word of God and prayer. Many a minister's time and spiritual life is sapped doing menial chores which should be delegated to others. Sadly enough others may be too proud to do them!!! According to verse 5 the word pleased the multitude. Many a modern saint has said, "My preacher's just as good to work as what I am".

They chose seven men. Among them are Phillip and Stephen who had wonderful ministries later on. Stephen had an additional quality. He was full of faith. (v.5) This refutes the oft cited theory that only apostles could work miracles before the apostles laid hands on Stephen. Jesus said in Matt. 21:21; Mark 11:23 that whoever had faith the size of a grain of mustard seed could work signs and wonders (Mt. 17:20). Stephen was full of it!!!! Moreover if they knew he was full of faith, how could they know it unless Stephen was doing something they could see?

More than
Apostles could
work miracles.

Stephen and Phillip first appear in the midst of church trouble. This passage teaches us that it is not only possible to come out of church trouble with the victory but one can come through trouble to a mighty ministry in God.

Another thing that is of interest about Stephen. He does not say, "I am full of faith. It is beneath my dignity to waste my time waiting on tables. I have just as great a ministry as you apostles."

The apostles laid hands on the men. Obviously it was to give them strength to wait on tables and wisdom to do it. It is absurd to imagine like some that they laid hands on them so they could work miraculous gifts. Stephen, at least, could do that before the laying on of hands.

Laying on of hands

Stephen's Ministry and Arrest (vss 7-15)

The book of Acts is the book of multiplication. Every so often the author pauses to explain that the church multiplied. Verse 7 is one of these places. Apparently some amount of time elapsed between the appointing of deacons and Stephen's arrest. Verse 8 tells us that Stephen was full of grace and power and was doing signs and great wonders among the people. The word "doing" is

this verse suggests that this had been going on for some time and this was a matter of habit with Stephen.

Stephen was disputing with some in the synagogues. He did not hide his head in the sand and say, "Well, I don't believe in debating." He not only met their arguments but he completely, thoroughly confused them. Their only defense was to have him arrested.

Verse 13 says they got false witnesses to help them. What they said was based on some element of truth, but it was taken out of context and grossly misrepresented. It seems almost that perhaps Stephen should have gone a little easier and saved himself for a future ministry. But it is perhaps the testimony Stephen gave in his death which may have been instrumental in winning Saul of Tarsus.

Verse 15 tells us that Stephen's face looked like an angel. It is entirely possible that many of those who watched were somoved by seeing Stephen that they later turned to the Lord.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Stephen's Defense and Execution

The high priest asked Stephen if those things were so he manifested a very strange behavior. Instead of defending himself, he launched out into a long discourse on Old Testament history and gives the longest sermon which makes almost the longest chapter in the New Testament!

Actually a little thought will reveal that this was not so strange after all. He, like Christ, knew that defense would be useless. The jury had already reached their verdict. He also knew that they would not listen to another sermon. Instead of defending himself, he uses the last few moments in his life to preach. But he leads them into the topic by the oblique approach. He goes into his very repugnant (as far as the pharisees were concerned) topic by way of neutral ground that both he and his audience could both agree on. Some ministers who wade into a Bible study like they were chopping weeds could profit by the example of Stephen.

Abraham (vss 2-7) Stephen begins with the obedience of Abraham to the Divine call (vss. 2-4) Abraham's obedience is a direct contrast to the disobedience of his audience. The obedience is followed by a promise of inheriting the land. (v. 5) This obedience is followed by a prophecy of captivity and hardship in Egypt. (vs. 6, 7) The section is concluded by a passing reference to the covenant of circumcision.

The birth of Isaac, Jacob and the 12 patriarchs is passed over in one verse (v. 8).

Answer to
why God
allows some
things to happen
See p. 41 bfm

Adventures of Joseph (vss 9-16) The treatment of Joseph by his brothers parallels the treatment of Christ by the Jews. Joseph becoming a savior to the family also parallels Christ.

Moses and the Exodus (vss.17-37) There is still nothing in these verses with which Stephen's audience could disagree. There is a little subtle, very indirect chiding of their own behavior in the discription of the Jew's rejection of Moses and of his later becoming a savior to them. (vss 24-28,35) The parallel to Christ is obvious. Stephen was also able to sneak in a little messianic prophecy in vs.37.

The Wilderness Wanderings (vss.38-44) The unfaithfulness of the Israelites and further disobedience to Moses is still applicable to his audience. (vss 40-42) Stephen even quotes a few verses from Amos to illustrate this (Amos 5:25-27). He concludes by mentioning the Babylonian captivity as a culmination to this unfaithfulness.

From Joshua to David is summarized in one verse (vs.45) The defeat of the nations living in Canaan is the emphasis. In verses 46 to 50 he tells of the building of the temple and explains that this does not imply that Jehovah is a localized Deity.

From verses 2-50 he has summarized most of the Old Testament. He has contrasted the promises and goodness of God with the people's disobedience. At this point Stephen must have sensed that his audience had tuned him out. They were not going to accept anything he had to say regardless of what it was.

Thus in verse 51 he bursts forth with an invective which rivals Matt.23. With great surprising, devastating force he accuses his audience of being as bad as the worst reprobates in the Old Testament. In verse 52 he brings the point even closer to home. Their fathers in OT days killed the prophets. These prophets all spoke about the coming of Christ. He actually, unlike Peter, uses the words "betrayers" and "murderers". He has nothing to lose now. The "jig is up". He knows he is a dead man. He can say anything he wants to. He does not plead for mercy like a coward. With courage like steel he hurls these charges against his executors. He finishes by calling them hypocrites who have not kept the law. (v.53)

Stephen's Dying Vision (vss.54-60)

When they heard this, they were so enraged that they could only grit their teeth. They were stunned they he would have the audacity to address them in such a manner.

Before they could recover while they were in a state of shock so that they could not even speak, the Lord opened heaven for Stephen. He saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right of the glory of God. (v.56) He did not see two Divine beings. He saw Jesus as man and Jesus as God. He actually saw basically

the same vision Ezekiel saw (1:26-28) Ezekiel saw rays of glory and one in the midst of them who looked like a man. Stephen saw the glory, but the one like a man was standing beside or next to the glory instead of sitting in the midst of it. The glory, Jesus as God and one like a man, Jesus as man, did not become two persons just because one changed positions.

The word "hand" is not in the Greek text. The word for "right" is in the plural and does not refer to hand. Like Ezekiel Stephen only saw one person! Alford approaches the truth when in his Greek Testament he says, "'Right hand' is never used of pre-existence (of Christ)...but always with reference to His exaltation in His HUMANITY after the course of His suffering and triumph." (on Heb. 1:2) Many other Trinitarian expositors agree.

Stephen not only saw this vision but also told his executors about it. He said, "Behold I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right of God." (v. 56). No one ever saw any more than one person when heaven was opened. This in itself is fatal to the doctrine of the Trinity! "Son of man" in Hebrew and Aramaic means "human being". This is another indication that the reference here is between the human and divine natures of Christ.

Stephen's remark today would be like saying, "I saw heaven opened and I saw the Boston strangler standing right by God!" He might have gained a few precious moments of life but he "blew" it all with his last few words. He was immediately executed by stoning. Everything was made nice and legal by a witness, Paul of Tarsus. (v. 58)

Stephen prayed (epikaleo) as he died. He said as he prayed, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." (v. 59) Why did he not address the 1st person in the Trinity? God is the one who receives spirits of the dead (Ps. 31:5; Ecc. 12) Stephen did not think God and Jesus were two persons. He knew that they were the same or he never would have prayed as he did!!! Stephen then cried out the most noble prayer in history (see Luke 23:34), "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." If he thought Jesus and God were two persons why did he do all his talking to just one person. He was in bad shape. He needed all the help he could get. If there were two others besides Jesus why didn't he call on them too?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Further Persecution, The Gospel Come to Samaria and Beyond.

Stephen did more in his death than he did in his life. The Jews were so enraged that persecution on the church was increased seven fold. The church had forgotten about the great commission to preach the gospel to the whole world. They had grown and increased and become very prosperous and numerous. the persecution upon Stephen's dead made them spread out and thus obey the Lord!.

Satan's attempts to scatter the church have been compared to a man hitting a fire with a stick. He scattered the glowing coals all over the field and started a hundred fires in the place of one!

Persecution following Stephen (vss 1-3) All except the apostles were scattered into Judea and Samaria. This was in fulfillment of the first part of the Lord's statement in Acts 1:8. The Lord had first gone to Samaria and paved the way. The Lord had sowed (John 4). Now they would water and reap the increase.

They had great grief because of Stephen's death. They could not understand why one with seemingly such a great ministry ahead of him would die so young. Perhaps some foolishly charged God. They did not know that Stephen's death was laying the ground work for even greater revivals than Stephen had ever imagined. All too often we think our little niche is the only place the work of God is. The work of God is greater than any one town or locality. It spreads from sea to sea!

Not only could they not understand Stephen's death but at the same time persecution began in a way they had not previously experienced. A young man named Saul was carrying on systematic, organized persecution. His zeal made those who were before him seem like sluggards. It seemed as if God was very far away and that He had forgotten them!

Revival in Samaria (vss 4-25)

"Those who were scattered went forth declaring the good news" (v.4) They, like Paul would later say, were cast down but not suppressed. Wherever they went they had to tell about Christ. It was like a fire shut up within their bones. Scattering the church is the greatest blender the devil ever made. He has spent his time ever since trying to make people self centered and think only about their own little corner.

Initial success (vss 5-*) Phillip, one of the deacons, went down to Samaria. This would be like a preacher today going into the inner city ghetto. It took the love of Christ to forget old hatred and racial prejudice.

When Samaria heard and saw the signs which he did, they gave heed. They heard demons cry out. Paralytics and cripples were healed. There was much joy in the city. (v.8) Much joy, however, is not evidence of the Holy Ghost baptism. We are not saved by joy. Neither was the fact that mighty signs and wonders were operating in their midst an evidence that they possessed all that God had for them. *Assemblies of God - etc.*

Introduction of Simon (vss.9-13)

Simon was one of the countless practitioners of black magic in NT times (cf. Acts 19:14). The papyrus discovered in the sands of Egypt give ample testimony to the interest in magic. We find everything from a charm on how to become invisible to one for being successful at love.

Simon was a top professional. He was the Blackstone of his day. But Simon saw something that far outstripped anything he or any of his magician brethren had ever seen before. He "believed Phillip preaching about the kingdom and the name of Jesus." (v.12) The next verse tells us that Simon joined the crowd who was getting baptized. Moreover we are told that Simon was very highly impressed with the signs which he saw.

Visit by Peter and John (vss 14-18)

When the apostles heard that Samaria had received the word, they sent Peter and John. This is strange if Peter were the first pope. Why do we find his subordinates sending him out on a mission???? We are not told why they sent them. We presume it was to investigate their experience. The Jews somewhat tended to consider the Samaritans as their inferiors. Jesus said, "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

Since this prejudice was there, the Lord probably withheld the baptism of the Holy Ghost until these church leaders got there so that there would be no doubt that their salvation was genuine. Then too, Jesus gave the apostles the keys to the kingdom. It was then fitting that apostles be there to open the door for the Samaritans.

Note that in verse 15 as soon as the apostles arrived, the first thing they did was to lay hands on the Samaritans that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Apparently this was an experience which they felt all should receive. They felt that something was lacking in their lives.

Verse 16 says, "For He had not yet fallen upon any of them, only they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus." Some have inferred from this that we have here a different formula from Acts 2:38. Actually if all the baptism verses in Acts which mention a formula are examined it will be found that the name "Jesus" is the common element though other titles are sometimes used. Note the following:

"in the name of JESUS CHRIST (Acts 2:38; 10:48)
LORD JESUS (Acts 8:16; 19:5)

Some manuscripts on Acts 2:38 read Lord Jesus Christ as do some on Acts 19:5. It is possible that "Lord Jesus Christ" was the more common formula. There is actually nothing wrong with inserting as many of the 200+ titles of Christ the candidate can hold his breathe for as long as the motivation is upright and sincere. The Bible nowhere forbids the use of titles but the name "Jesus" must be there.

Then they laid hands upon them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. (v.17) We are not told what happened when they got the Holy Ghost. We are merely informed that they received it. Many have suggested that this refutes the Pentecostal experience of speaking in tongues.

Actually the passage establishes our contention that when one receives the Holy Ghost baptism something miraculous happens. Something miraculous happened when the apostle's hands were laid on the people. It was something Simon could perceive with his senses and it was something miraculous. (see=perceive) It also had to be something miraculous or Simon would never have desired it to presumably enhance his magician's trade. It would have never been worth money to a person like Simon who thought only in terms of the extraordinary unless it was a miraculous infilling.

Simon's Error (vss 18-25)

The only sign that was miraculous and could be perceived in the entire Bible would be speaking in tongues. Simon thought that was the greatest trick he had ever seen. He responded as perhaps many had to his own trade secrets. The old lust for his trade came back to him. He could make a fortune at something like this.

The vast majority of the religious world believes that receiving the Holy Ghost is a quiet, inward experience that no one but the one receiving it can know anything about. (Some even believe that the one receiving it doesn't even sense anything!) With this idea in mind it is utterly impossible to explain why Simon would have reacted the way he did.

The miraculous experience they received is called "the gift of God" by Peter (v.20). The book of Acts knows only of a miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost. Terms such as "non-miraculous measure" are as fictitious as Snow White and the seven dwarfs!!!!

Peter said Simon could not do this not because he was not an apostle but because his heart was not right. Some have a different answer from Peter. They say only apostles could give the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands. The apostles did not give the Holy Ghost. They prayed that God would give it. (v.15)

This is the only instance (except for Acts 19:6) where an apostle laid hands on a person to receive the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2 and 10 there was no laying on of hands. The laying on of hands was thus not an essential thing in all cases.

Peter did not beat around the bush in telling Simon what was wrong with him. He did hold that there was hope for he told him to pray. (v.22) Simon feared the words of Peter. He knew well what power there was in a curse by an enemy. He wanted to

"Gift of H.G." is
"Gift of God."
God's Gift vs.

why the laying on of hands here? Simply to prove there are not different measures of the H.G. The baptism of H.G. could be received in different ways.

be sure that Peter would lift the curse from him.

There was no such thing as a pleasure trip for the apostles. As they returned to Jerusalem they preach the word in every village they stopped at.(v.25)

Phillip and the Eunuch (vss 26-40)

The angel spoke to Phillip and told him to go out to a deserted road way out in the desert. Seemingly by modern standards Phillip "had it made". He had a large church and the whole town was so to speak "eating out of his hand". How many modern ministers would leave a good thing like this? How many ministers are in a position where the Lord could tell them somethings like this?

Only God could know that the minister of finance of a far off country was travelling that road. Only God could know that he would at the very same time be reading a prophecy about Christ. But Phillip was in a place where God could talk to him, "The Spirit said to Phillip, Go and join yourself to this chariot." This must have taken great courage to step out in faith and risk being made a fool of and possibly being mistreated as a highway man.

There are many souls today who like the Eunuch read the Bible but do not understand what they are reading. They need someone who are filled with the Holy Ghost to guide them. In v.31 the Eunuch say, "How can I except someone guide me?" Phillip did not reprove him and tell him the word was so plain the all could know it. It is one of God's methods that men guide men.

He was reading from Isa 53. This is one of the clearest portions of the word about Christ. The Eunuch wanted to know if Isaiah was talking about himself or someone else.(v.34) A modernist, H.H.Rowley has published a study called The Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah. In this study he presents, among other things, a view which holds that the prophet was talking about himself!!! It is indeed lucky for the Eunuch that H.H.Rowley did not happen by on that day!

Some say that salvation begins and ends with Isa.53. Verse 35 says that Phillip began at this chapter and declared to him the good news about Christ. This must have included baptism, Baptism is indeed in the gospel.

"They came unto some water and the Eunuch said, 'Behold here is water (or "look water") what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (verse 36) He did not hold up his canteen and say "here's some water." If he were sprinkled, there would have been no need to stop the chariot.

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They stopped the chariot. They BOTH went DOWN INTO the water. (vs.38) This would hardly be necessary if the eunich were baptized by sprinkling or pouring. In verse 39 we are told they came up out of the water! This would be unnecessary stream pollution unless immersion were the required mode of baptism.

Many take great stock in the fact that the King James Version does not say whether or not the Eunich received the Holy Ghost. They feel that this proves that all do not need to receive it. Actually the Alexandrine and other manuscripts of the Greek text add the words "the Holy Ghost fell upon the eunich...." to verse 39.

Some while ago I was moderating as we were debating the alleged Church of Christ. The debater was very irate because I gave our debating brother this information. In his final speech all he could say was, "Well it doesn't say he spoke in tongues unless friend Ferguson can find another manuscript that says that."

Of course our brother Lewis had already pointed out that whenever the Holy Ghost fell on someone in the book of the Acts (for example 10:45,46) they always spoke in tongues. Moreover if an additional speech had been allowed it could have been pointed out that the reading "the Holy Ghost fell on the Eunich" has as good a support as the eunich's confession in the Son of God which our friends in the alleged church of Christ value so highly. But of course this would not have been needed as this gentleman did not challenge our point on this.

- rapture* ⊗ The Spirit caught Phillip away. The same verb is used here as in the rapture passage of I Thes. 4:17. Again the Lord did not allow Phillip to capitalize on this gain. Wherever Phillip went he preached Christ at every "whistle stop". (v.40)

CHAPTER NINE

CONVERSION OF SAUL AND THE HEALINGS OF AINEAS AND TABITHA

Conversion of Saul (vss 1-31)

Saul on the Damascus Road (vss 1-9)

Paul wanted everything to be nice and legal. He got letters of authority for that which he planned. Persecuting and eradicating the Christians was the single passion of Paul. Perhaps he wanted to erase from his mind the picture of Stephen and the words which he had said on that day.

Many would say that Paul received the Holy Ghost when he saw a light from heaven. It was indeed a miraculous vision. But joy, miracles and visions are not signs of the Holy Ghost. Paul had refused to acknowledge Stephen's vision and now he was seeing

his own vision of the glory of God. Paul was seeing the same vision Stephen saw but there was only one person present in each case!

He heard a voice and saw a light. Does that make two persons?? Why is not this account used to teach the Trinity? The voice said "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?" (v.4) Saul fell under the Lord's edict in Matt 23:40 which says "inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these the least of my brethren ye did it unto me."

Paul wondered who of all the many he was persecuting this could be. It was made plain in answer to "Who are thou Lord." The Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Now it was plain. Some would say, "Well it's all done now Paul. You believe in Jesus just accept the completed work of Calvary. There's nothing more to do." But the Lord said, "Get up and go into the city and it shall be told you what you must DO." (v.5) To see what it was read Acts 22:16)

When God get's a man where he wants him there is no turning to the right or to the left. Paul was so hemmed in that he couldn't even eat or drink. He had been blinded by the glory he had been seeking to deny. There was nothing he could do but obey.

Ananias and Paul (vss 10-18)

The dream (vs.10-16)

It was ironic. Paul would not regain his sight until one of those whom he came to arrest prayed for him. It was not easy even for God Himself to convince Ananias that Saul was safe to approach. He must have had a very fearful reputation.

The visit (vs.17-19) Ananias came in and laid his hands on Paul and said, "The Lord sent me in order that you might regain your sight and BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST." Here was in reverse what many say is not possible today. Here an apostle to be receives laying on of hands for the Holy Ghost. Many believe that only apostles could dispense the Holy Ghost, but here Paul received it apparently by a mere layman. After this he received his sight and was baptized. (This is what he had to do)

Paul Early Christian Life (vss 19-30)

Instead of persecuting the faith, he started preaching it!!!! He preached Jesus that he is the Son of God. All of a sudden all the Scriptures fit in place and made sense. Paul got stronger and stronger. His great knowledge and education made him no match at all for those in the synogogue. He confused the Jews at Damascus by proving conclusively from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Christ.

Instead of being the hunter, Paul became the hunted. Men were now trying to take his life. These were probably the very "key" men Paul was counting on contacting to help him stamp out the faith there in Damascus.

Paul didn't miraculously disappear
Paul escaped by being let down from the wall in a basket. This reminds us that often we must hold up the man of God in prayer. If we hold onto the prayer ropes there will be many a soul who will escape from the snare of the enemy.

Paul tried to join the church at Jerusalem. Everyone was afraid of him!! Barnabus spoke up for him. Barnabus was later on to be very useful in developing Paul's ministry. They thought Paul was trying to gather names and addresses of meeting places. But Barnabus told how he had done at Damascus.

He attempted to do the same thing in Jerusalem. Here, as was Paul's fate all his life, he became the target for assassination. He had to escape to Tarsus, his home town. He had to study and develop himself for a few years. This shows us that the mere fact that a person has received the Holy Ghost does not necessarily mean he is ready for the ministry.

We have somewhat of a modern parallel. Ben Franklin was billed by a large Church of Christ publishing house as the "greatest New Testament preacher of this century". He was their champion against the people who believed God still worked miracles. He and his brethren purchased a half page ad in a large newspaper fighting Pentecost. They offered a thousand dollar reward for proof of Divine healing. He was appointed champion to fight the Pentecostal message. The more he studied to fulfill this mission, the clearer it became. God showed him what he had fought was the truth. He was filled with the Holy Ghost and his former brethren are trying to kill his influence wherever they can.

Verse 31 is one of those multiplication verses Luke throws in every once in a while. The church used a time of peace wisely and grew and increased.

Healing of Aineas (vss. 32-35)

The scene suddenly shifts to Peter. The narratives in Acts alternate between Peter and Paul and finally terminate by following Paul completely. Peter just happened to be passing through Lydda. He saw a cripple. He must have seen many. There was something different about this one. He said, "Aineas, Jesus Christ heals you. Arise and make up your bed." He must have heard Jesus say something similar many times. (see Matt. 9:6)

Through this single miracle there was a great revival in the cities of Lydda and Saron. The continuing need for miracles and people turning to the Lord is so great as to need no comment.

Raising of Dorcas from the Dead, (vs 3-43)

We know that it is appointed to men once to die (Heb. 2:27). We cannot interfere with the appointed seasons which the Father has placed in his power. There was something about this case that made God vary His processes for this one instant. There are many characteristics of this healing which remind us of similar events in our Lord's life. For example:

- A message not to trouble Peter (v. 38) (Luke 8:49)
- Peter put out all the mourners (v. 40) (Matt. 9:25)
- Peter said, "Tabitha Arise". (v. 40) (Lk. 5:41)

As in the healing of Aineas many converts were gained (v. 42). This miracle explains why Peter came to Joppa and why he was staying in Simon's house.

CHAPTER TEN: THE SALVATION OF CORNELIUS

"Now there was a certain man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a captain in the Italian brigade. He was religious and feared God... He gave to many charities in the community and always prayed to God." (vss. 1, 2)

He was a Roman, a member of the ruling race. He was an officer, a ruler among rulers. He was religious along with all his family. Fewer and fewer today even make the claim to be religious. Those that do do not give a very important place to prayer and giving.

These opening verses make it clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that position and religion are not enough. Cornelius was to hear words "whereby he would be saved." (11:14)

Cornelius' Dream (vss. 3-6) It is interesting that Cornelius had his vision about the same time of the day that the lame man was healed in Acts 3. There are few men in history who have ever been addressed by an angel on a first name basis. Cornelius' reply was, "What is it, sir?" The word is "lord". Cornelius, as a gentile has a far greater freedom in using the word "lord" than would a Jew. This was merely a respectful form of address and not the same as Paul, a free Jew calling Jesus Lord in Acts 9:5.

The seven wonders of the world were built as memorials by men. The great temple at Ephesus now lays in ruins, but Cornelius' prayers are still on record as a memorial before God. This is a great contrast with Babylon whose sins reached heaven and made God remember. (Rev. 18:5)

In vss 5 and 6 Cornelius is bidden to send a man after Peter. His exact address is given. This is of signal importance. The

why? maybe
some would have
seen & believed

wonderful vision of the angel did not disqualify Cornelius from being under subjection to the minister. There are a few that we find now and then who claim to many visions that they do not, so they say, need teaching from a minister. They clearly did not receive these visions from the same God Cornelius did.

Peter's Vision (vss. 9-23) It was noon and unlike one or two of our modern day ministers, Peter was not in bed. He had appointed deacons in ch. 6 so that he could give himself to prayer, and he was doing precisely what he had said he would do. He wanted to come down and eat, but he wanted to pray more.

While those downstairs were fixing dinner and while Cornelius' messengers were arriving Peter fell into a trance. He, like, Stephen saw heavens opened and a sheet being lowered to earth with every conceivable kind of unclean animal in it. A voice said, "Rise Peter kill and eat."

Peter, unlike some, did not hold a vision more sacred than the word of God. He said, "Not at all Lord. I have never eaten anything common or unclean." (v. 14) Perhaps Peter recognized the voice to be that of the Lord Jesus. The voice replied "Don't call the things God cleansed common." This is a definite reference to the purifying of the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:13), and it is a clear reference to Jesus as God. The gentiles were purchased with God's blood (20:28) and were not to be called unclean. To do so would be to make Christ's death in vain.

As in John 21 the Lord had to do this three times to get the point across to hard headed Peter. In none of the times did Peter apparently make any reply or attempt to obey. Peter could not understand what all of this could possibly mean (v. 17). While he was still trying to put all the pieces together, the answer came. The men whom Cornelius had sent now stood before the door.

The Spirit spoke to Peter and told him to go with the men and to doubt no other for. He said "I have sent them." This would be hard for Peter to accept. Some devout Jews bathed after they returned from the marketplace for fear they might have brushed up against a gentile. Four times was enough! Peter received the guests.

Peter's visit to Cornelius. Introduction (vss 23-33)

Peter went with them. He still had doubts. He took along some of the brethren from the Joppa church as witnesses. (v. 23) When Cornelius saw Peter he fell down and worshipped (v. 25). It is indeed strange why Peter, the first pope rebuked Cornelius. He said, "Get up! I'm just a man." What a contrast to the popes who bade all the sovereigns of Europe bow and kiss their foot. One wonders why Peter failed to set the example and off his foot to Cornelius? Cornelius was a little too anxious to render improper exaltation to men and angels. (see v. 4)

Verse 28 shows that Peter finally got the idea of the vision. He said, "God showed me to call no man common or unclean." This is a good bit of advice for us today. Sometimes we get a little too pharisaical and think ourselves above talking to lowly sinners whom Christ so dearly loved.

In verses 30-32 Cornelius relates again the account of his vision. He adds the information that he had been praying 2 hours and that the angel looked like a man in bright clothes. He concludes by saying, "Now then we are all here before God to hear all the things which are commanded you by the Lord." (v.33)

Peter's Sermon (vss.34-43). It was easy for Peter to preach to this kind of audience. There was no talking, no passing notes; and no one slept while Peter spoke! No one gritted their teeth and said, "No preacher's gonna tell me what to do!" There are few sermons like Peter's in Acts 10, but there are few congregations who are willing to say what Cornelius said in v.33.

The life of Jesus (vss 33-39) Peter suddenly came to the conclusion that the church was not an exclusive country club where only the "elite" are acceptable. The only requirements for social acceptance is that a person "fears God and works righteousness," (v.35) Many shout about the Holy Ghost verses in this sermon and in the verse about baptism, but have not yet accepted the revelation in vs.35 or even realize such a revelation exists.

"(God) sent the word which was to the children of Israel. He announced the good news about peace through Jesus Christ. This man is Lord of all." (v.36) Jesus was the prophesied "prince of peace." (Isa.9:6) The Roman centurion knew about the "pax romana", the peace brought about by the Roman rule. It was a very unstable kind of peace and had to be enforced by the Roman legions. Here in Palestine keeping peace was like holding the lid on a boiling caldron. But a lasting peace comes through Jesus Christ.

The Romans are not the masters of the world. Jesus Christ is Lord of everything. Someone has said, "Jesus is either Lord of all or He's not Lord at all." Isa.9:6 and 7 are old testament verses where the kingship and giving of peace are both brought together in one person. "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."

Peter assumes Cornelius is familiar with the life of Christ. It would be interesting if Cornelius were the centurion of Matt.8 whom Jesus said would go in before the Jews. He begins with the baptism of John as does the gospel of Mark.

Verse 38 tells us of how "God annointed Him with the Holy Spirit and power, who went about doing good and healing all those who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him." (see the notes on Acts 2:33;4:27) As man Christ said, "The Son can of His

own self do nothing." (John 5:19) Verse 38 is perhaps a reference to Christ's baptism. He needed an anointing with power as far as His humanity is concerned. As man God was with Him. As God He is now with us. (Matt. 28:20) "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." (II Cor. 5:19) Humanity was with Divinity but they were not two persons.

Peter stated that they were witnesses of the miracles Christ did. Some imagine that because the miracles of Christ can be attested by witnesses therefore no more miracles need to be worked. Then the rest of the book of Acts is needless!

The death and glorification of Jesus (vss. 40-43) Note how in talking to a Roman Peter says "whom they murdered by hanging upon a tree." The Jews bore the guilt. They thought they had pushed it off on the Romans but they stood guilty before God. Even future generations bear this guilt right down to the coming of the Lord. Rev. 1:7 says that when Christ comes "they also which pierced Him" shall see Him.

He then mentions the resurrection. His witness is not the OT but to selected witnesses, actual people who ate and drank with Him. He ends with the commission of Christ. "And He commissioned us to proclaim to the people and solemnly charge that this is the one appointed by God as a judge of the living and dead." (v. 42) This appointing applies to the human nature of Christ. (see 17:31)

He finally adds in v. 43 that all the prophets give witness to Christ. All who believe in Him receive remission of sins through His name. We know that baptism is for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38) "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16. Baptism is in the name of Jesus Christ. (v. 48) The name "Jesus" must be invoked over the candidate in order for Him to receive the remission of sins. John 20:31 says "believing you might have life in His name." (=when His name is called" Bauer p. 576) Eph. 5:26 says "in order that He might cleanse it in the laver of regeneration by the word" Word here is the spoken word, the baptismal formula. In Acts 22:16 Ananias tells Paul, "That are you waiting for. Get up and get baptized and get your sins washed away by getting the Lord's name called over you." (see note in this commentary on this verse)

This is why
Name is *
to be spoken
Also for 4:12
Acts 17:31

Outpouring of Holy Ghost on Cornelius (vss. 44-48) There was never a sermon as important as this one. But there is therefore no sermon that was ever preached which cannot be interrupted by an outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Those who fear their sermons are too important to be interrupted by the Spirit must be better preachers than Peter was! The Spirit fell on those hearing the word. Some modern day laity who never listen at Bible study would have been disqualified.

"fell upon", "gift" in vss. 44, 45 all refer to a miraculous supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The reason they knew this was that they were hearing them speak with tongues and magnifying God. (v.46) Each and every time there is actually descriptive material given of a person receiving the Holy Ghost, they spoke in tongues. There were other things happening, but the common element was the speaking in tongues. Note the following passages:

Acts 2:4	Wind, fire,	and TONGUES
Acts 10:46	magnifying God	and TONGUES
Acts 19:6	prophesying	and TONGUES

In each of these three instance there is only one common element.

Then Peter said, "Is anyone able to forbid water so that these might not be baptized which have receive the Holy Ghost LIKE WE also (received it)." (for "as" see Bauer p.905) When Peter said that he was talking to some brethren from Joppa (v.23) These brethren from Joppa received the Holy Ghost like Cornelius did. (see 15:6-8) In fact the whole church received it that way. Acts 10:47 and 15:8 refute the idea that Cornelius was a special case. The whole idea was that he received the Holy Ghost like everyone else received it not in some odd or different way.

Note that the fact that Cornelius had received the Holy Ghost did not make him exempt from baptism. Peter "COMMANDED" him to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." The King James reading "in the name of the Lord" has such scanty support by the Greek text that neither Nestles nor Wescott-Hort's Greek text give it even a passing note. It is found in only a few very late manuscripts. Perhaps the full reading was "Lord Jesus Christ". Note that Peter did not direct them to say the "sinners prayer" or say "in Jesus' name forgive me".

Peter had told them that the remission of sins was THROUGH the name (v.43). When did he tell them to get the remission through the name? In verse 48 when he said for them to be baptized "with the mention of the name of Jesus Christ." (see Bauer 576)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PETER'S DEFENCE AND THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

The apostles and brethren heard that the gentiles received the word. Apparently the brethren had as much say in it as the 12 apostles did. They did not have the autocratic government that was to later develop in the Roman church. Also note that the actions of the first pope(?) are questioned by the church. This was never done with respect to later popes who palmed themselves off as the vicars of Christ who were infallible. Why did not Peter in voke the doctrine of infallibility in his defence???

The inquest at Jerusalem (vss 1-18)

When Peter reached Jerusalem charges were filed against him by "those of the circumcision" (v.2) According to Acts 10:23,45 and Galatians 2:12 "those of the circumcision" refers to ordinary members of the church. Acts 10:45 refers to some brethren from Joppa. Gal.2:12 refers to some of the saints in James' church. For ordinary members to file charges against the first pope, Christ's representative on earth was unusual!

Peter's defence (vs.4-18) Verses 4-11 are almost straight repeat from the 10th chapter. In verse 12 we are informed that of the brethren from Joppa whom Peter took with him six were present at the conference (see 10:23). In verse 14 we are told that the angel told Cornelius "who (Peter) shall tell words to you by which you shall be saved and all your house."

This tells us that Cornelius was not saved in spite of his social position and good works. When did Peter tell Cornelius how to be saved? In 10:43 Peter said that remission of sins was through Jesus' name. In verse 48 he told him how to apply the name in baptism.

In verse 15 Peter says, "As I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell upon them just like upon us in the beginning." Who is "us"? Obviously "those of the circumcision", the ordinary church members of the church at Jerusalem. This is another refutation of the teaching that would have us believe that Cornelius was a special case. All the saints at Jerusalem got the Holy Spirit "just like" Cornelius got it. In public debate I called this to my opponent's attention in almost every speech I had, but he failed to find time to give any attention to it.

The Holy Ghost falling upon Cornelius reminded Peter of the words of Jesus with reference to the baptism of the Holy Ghost. "John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." If Cornelius was not included in the "you" and if Cornelius did not even receive the Holy Ghost baptism, then why, pray tell, did Peter think about a totally irrelevant Scripture. Peter would have been surprised to hear of the recent modern day teaching about the Holy Ghost which would have us to believe that only the 12 apostles could get it.

Verse 17: "If God therefore gave to them the same gift as (He gave to us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could forbid God." (Bauer says the word "isos" means "the same, equal in number size and quality." (p.381) Cornelius received the same gift everybody else got. Peter did not say "to us apostles" but to "us believers". It was not a select group or special country club. Some have tried to go to verse 15 and say "in the beginning refers to the day of Pentecost and therefore only the

*for the translation of hōsper as "just like" see Bauer p.908

apostles. The article ("the") is not in the Greek text. It does not refer only to the beginning of the church but "beginning" is used as in I John 2:24 as the beginning of each persons walk with God.

This testimony was enough. They did not have to hear tapes of Cornelius speaking in tongues or affidavits from three linguists that they were real languages. They glorified God saying, "Therefore God gave repentance unto life to the gentiles."

Founding of the church at Antioch(vss 19-26)

In verse 19 we have a reference to the persecution because of Stephen and the scattering of the church. Those who were scattered went to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, but they only spoke the word to Jews. Some from Cyprus and Cyrene, however, came to Antioch and declared the good news about Christ to the Greeks there. God prospered their efforts. The Bible says, "The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." (vs. 21)

The hand of the Lord is the Holy Ghost. Compare Matt 12:28 with Luke 11:19. Some would have us believe God's hand is a separate person from Him! At any rate word reached the church at Jerusalem about them and they sent Barnabus into Antioch. (v. 22) When new churches opened, it was apparently customary to send someone experienced to set things in order. Barnabus had proven his dedication by his charity and ability to console others. (see 4:36) He had proven his ability to discern the value of others by recommending Paul to the church. (vid. 9:29)

Barnabus came and saw the grace of God and rejoiced. He put his approval on the work. He exhorted all of them "with purpose of heart (or heartfelt purpose) to stay with the Lord." (v. 23) Bauer defines the word "prosmenō" as "remain, stay with, continue in" It is strange that Barnabus would tell them this if believers could not backslide and be lost. Did Barnabus inaugurate the new church by preaching false doctrine?

Luke adds "because he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and faith," Luke apparently approved of Barnabus' preaching. (See Acts 6:5 where Stephen is given a similar description.)

Barnabus was wise enough to know that he would need help. The new converts needed teaching. He knew of just the man. He went to Tarsus to get Paul to help him. Paul spent a whole year there teaching. Perhaps as an outgrowth of Paul's teaching the disciples there first came to get the name "Christian." (v. 26) "Christian" is like the word "Roman", "African" or "Herodian"

The founding of the church at Antioch was a red letter day. This was to become a very important church. It was in a very large

city. It ranked next to Rome and Alexandria in size. It was primarily a Greek city. Therefore it was an ideal place to found a prosperous church from which missionary endeavors could be launched and help could be sent to other churches. It has been called the mother of all gentile churches. It was also a center where many of the leaders of the early church met.

Prophecy of a Famine (vss 27-30) Agabus prophesied that there would be a famine in the whole world during the time of Agabus (41-54 AD) The date of the famine tells us the Paul must have been converted around ten years after the founding of the church in 30AD. Allowing 4 years for seclusion and a year for his teaching ministry at Antioch, he must have been converted about nine years after Pentecost at the most. Cf. also Gal. 1:17; 2:1; Acts 18:2.

Some would have us to believe that there is no information of value from the gifts of the Spirit which cannot also be read in the Bible. Therefore they conclude that gifts are no longer needed. But how could they have looked into their Bibles and seen that a famine was coming. This was valuable to know because they could prepare for it.

They took up an offering for the poorer church in Jerusalem. This is one of the advantages of missions. If the founders of the Antioch church had stayed where they were, they would have been no aid to Judea. The offering was sent by Paul and Barnabus. The early church was very mindful of charitable works like this. We, today, should profit from their example.

CHAPTER TWELVE: Death of James, Peter's Escape from Jail and Herod's Death.

Death of James (vss 1-3) This Herod is not to be confused with Herod the great of Matt 2. There were many Herods as well as many Caesars. He saw that persecuting the church was politically advantageous and so James the brother of John became the second recorded martyr. Ancient monarchs were always looking for scape goats to blame their troubles on.

Peter's Escape from Jail (vss 4-18) Why James was killed but Peter was miraculously delivered is unusual and the answer is known only to God. Apparently, however, the same fate awaited Peter at an opportune time. He was placed in maximum security because, no doubt, of his record of jail breaks. Every possible precaution was made even to the extent of his having to sleep chained with soldiers.

The escape from prison was so smooth that Peter himself thought he was dreaming until it was over. The Lord used automatic doors centuries before supermarkets. (vss 8-10) The church had been praying fervently for Peter's release (v. 5), but they were so

busy praying that they didn't have time to let the answer in. They refused to believe that it was really Peter. Someone said, "It is his angel" (v.15) This statement presumably refers to some Jewish superstition about angels. We often have set, stereotyped ways in which God should answer prayer. When God does not work this way we find it hard to accept what God does.

Note that according to v.17 he went to another place. He did not tempt God. He used a little discretion. One can well imagine the confusion that must have reigned in the prison and in Herod's court.

Herod's Death. (vss 19-23) Herod mediated in a dispute between the people of Tyre and Sidon. As an orator he was so skilled that the people praised him as God. This was not uncommon with rulers of that day, but Herod knew better than his pagan counterparts. The king was smitten by an angel and the Bible says, "He was eaten by worms." Perhaps he received a sore which became infested with maggots.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MISSIONARY JOURNEY TO CYPRUS AND ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA

The Call of Paul and Barnabus (vss. 1-3) The opening verses mention five prophets and teachers in the Antioch church. Someone has said, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if all these great Bible teachers could come together in one big church!" But that is not God's plan. God's plan is "go ye". Those churches which are not afraid to invest money and men into the work of the Lord are the growing churches.

Note also that Paul and Barnabus were doing something when they were called. They were not just sitting around dreaming about the day when they would make the "big time". This is the way it is with God's men. They do what they can where they are and God calls them to better things.

Verse 2 tells us they were ministering to the Lord and fasting. No one ever got a call when they were sitting around doing nothing. The Holy Ghost said, "Separate to me Paul and Barnabus into the work for which I have called them." (v.2) We do not know whether this was simply an audible divine voice or through a prophecy of some kind.

Though they had already been fasting, they fasted some more. They laid hands on them for strength. Some places if one would try to leave to go into the ministry hands would be laid on them for other reasons! One may be sure that God blessed the three remaining teachers and that the church in Antioch grew more than it ever had before. Those who are so afraid of losing their members to the work of God are like the man who buried his talent.

Ministry at Cyprus (vss. 4-12) This was their initiation into missionary work. Some Cypriotes had helped found the church at Antioch (11:20), but there may not have been an established church there. Their first step was to proclaim the word in a synagogue in one of the main cities. Jews were so widely dispersed. it was hard to find a city without a synagogue. We are not told about the results. Possibly their early results were very meagre. The comment is made that John Mark was their assistant.

(Opposition of Bar-Jesus, vss. 5-12)

At Paphos they met another magician (see ch. 8) named Barjesus. The governor of the island had sent word that he wanted to hear the gospel. The sorcerer withstood the apostles. We do not know how he did them whether with magic or actual physical force. Paul said, "O full of all kinds of guile and tricks, you child of the devil, enemy of all righteousness won't you ever cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord." (v. 10) Apparently the opposition had been severe and very prolonged. Paul went on to say, "And now behold the hand of the Lord is on you...." (compare this with 11:21.)

Struck blind
[I had an opponent in public debate challenge me to strike him blind. I replied that he was giving me free course to talk to the people and was not at all like Elymus of Acts 13. When he persisted in asking to be struck blind I told the audience that I emphatically denied my friend was as bad as Elymus and if he wished to offer proof that he was, we would listen to his refutation of my statement. He declined to accept my challenge. Instead he admitted that he was not really as bad as Barjesus thus losing a point he never had anyway!]

did not strike
[This is clearly not a typical case. In fact it is the only one on record. Alexander the Coppersmith withstood Paul to his face (II Tim 4) before Nero. Striking him blind would have been very helpful, but Paul did not do it. Note also that the Lord in Lk 9:54 did not allow fire to come down and destroy the Samaritans at the disciples request.]

Antioch in Pisidia. (vss 13-52) This Antioch is not to be confused with the city they had just left. This Antioch was in southern Turkey. Antioch was a popular name. It was named after various Syrian kings who ruled off and on in this part of the world. It ultimately goes back to one of Alexander the great's generals.

The governor of Cyprus had been converted by the smiting of Barjesus with blindness and for some unknown reason they left for Antioch in Pisidia. Perhaps they wanted to declare the good news in as many places as possible. It was at this point that John Mark parted company with them and returned to Jerusalem. Perhaps he was sick or maybe he lost nerve. We do not know. We do know that in II Tim. 4:11 Paul requests that Mark be sent because he was profitable in the ministry.

As soon as Paul got into Antioch he made for the synagogue. It is recommended that the student do some reading in the following books in order to capture some of the flavor of the various cities which Paul visited and the kind of world into which the gospel came:

William M. Ramsay, The Cities of St. Paul. Grand Rapids: Baker rep.
St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen.

Adolf Deissman, Life of Paul.

Light from the Ancient East, reader should be acquainted with NT Greek

Merill Tenney, NT Backgrounds.

NT Survey. (very excellent)

Merill Unger, NT Archeology.

When he got into the synagogue he did not try to disrupt the service. St. Paul was a Christian gentleman. Note also that when his turn came he did not blast his audience with a machine gun. He did not, as some moderns, give something like the following: "Praise the Lord! I'm thankful I've been baptized in Jesus name cause I'd split hell wide open if I wasn't." Tactics like this would have been very foreign to any of the apostles.

In verse 15 Paul was asked to give exhortation or a word of comfort. He did just that. His "word" (or "discourse") was about 25 verses long. It is one of the most lengthy in the book of Acts second only to Stephen's. It comprises verses 16-41.

Summary of Old Testament Heros. (vss. 16-22)

Paul addressed the men of Israel and the God fearers. These were gentiles who believed in monotheism and followed some of the teaching of the synagogue. We would probably call them "friends of the church" today. They declined to accept Judaism probably because of cultural reasons.

This portion of Paul's sermon is very similar to Stephen's. He starts with material that is familiar to his audience and that they would all agree on. He goes from the known to the unknown. He is always a gentleman with his audience until they gave him reason for behaving otherwise.

He begins with telling them about the Exodus (vs. 17) He tells of the choosing and the lifting up of their fathers in Egypt. He says, "our fathers". He identifies himself with his audience. He gets on their good side by telling them that they are a special chosen people. Some modern ministers consider such tactics unapostolic. They obviously cannot cite apostle Paul in support of their theories. The use of the middle voice with "choose" gives the idea that God chose them for Himself. The deliverance from Egypt was a part of their national history of which the Jews

were very proud. In relating this Paul would both inspire and open the hearts of his audience.

He continues by relating about God's good providence during the wilderness wanderings. The verb suggests "bear up in one's arm as a nurse, i.e. care for someone tenderly." (see Bauer, p.835 on *tpopophoreo*)

In verses 19 and 20 he tells of the conquest of Canaan and the period of judges. This would be of great comfort to his audience who were separated from their enslaved land. It would speak to them of a day when God would once again restore to them their homeland.

He passes over Saul very tactfully. Instead of mentioning his sin he simply said that God "removed" him. He then brings up David of whom better things can be said. He explains how David pleased God very greatly. He is now ready to take them into a totally new revelation about the acts of God. Some would think these opening verses were wasted on irrelevant material, but Paul was preparing the hearts of his audience.

The life and death of Christ. (vss 23-30) He has told them about the various OT saving acts of God and of the deliverers God raised up then. He now builds on this foundation and tells them of the coming of Christ. He has not been shooting hit or miss like some modern ministers. He takes them very smoothly into his subject without even the smallest jolt. "Of this man's seed God brought to Israel a savior according to promise." (v.23)

They all accepted most of this. They were expecting a messiah. The only difference was in the tense. He did not say "God will bring"; he said "God brought". (other Greek texts read "raised up") He then mentions the name-Jesus.

The next part of his sermon is very similar to Peter's sermons in Acts 5 and 10. He starts with the preaching of John. This was fairly good neutral territory for him to start. John did not preach any new doctrine he simply prepared the hearts of the people. Some of his hearers may have been familiar with John's ministry. Paul refers to the fact that John preached repentance to Israel. This was not a hard doctrine for his audience to contemplate.

When John finished his ministry he spoke of a man whose shoe lace he was not worthy to tie or loose. (v.25) He has now taken his audience about as far as he can on almost totally familiar ground. He now pauses to make sure his audience is with him. He addresses them personally. He lets them take a deep breath. He identifies with them. He calls them "brethren". He does not treat them like gentiles. The gentiles there are recognized for the start that they have already made for God. Many moderns do not

recognize any start toward God but continually remind their audience that "they don't have nuthin'". He calls them children of Abraham. He reminds them once again that they are members of a special race if they are Jews.

He brings his message right down to the hearts of his audience in a very personal way. He says, "To you (emphatic pronoun) the word of this salvation is sent." (v.26) God is giving it to them. They were to get salvation. He eases up preaching doctrine and talks about something they can get which will meet a very real need in their life.

In verse 27 he separates his audience from those who killed Christ. He makes them a distinct group from the Jerusalemites. He also partly makes excuse for their killing Christ. He says that they did it in ignorance. He is not swinging a club. He has a much better and more sincere audience than Peter and Stephen had. In doing what they did (he does not yet mention what it was), they fulfilled the prophets.

He says they asked Pilate to kill Jesus. This tones down the fanatical cries of the angry mob. But this was still fulfilling what was written. Christ did not fail in His mission by dying he actually fulfilled it. And so they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb. Note that Paul completely passes over the miracles in the life of Christ in contrast to Peter.

But he centers on one miracle-the resurrection. (v.30) This was proven by actual witnesses who went up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem. "And", says Paul, "We are preaching to you (emphatic pronoun) the good news about the promise which was made to the fathers because this (promise) God has fulfilled to us (emph. p.n.) their children by raising up Jesus as it is also written in the second Psalm, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." (vss.32,33)

Several comments need to be made about these verses. Paul had made two controversial statements. (1) God caused a deliverer of David's seed to be born and (2) that deliverer was resurrected from the dead. He now proceeds to prove both of them by the Bible.

What was the promise in verse 32? It was the promise mentioned in verse 23 that a savior would be born of David's seed. There is no other previously mentioned promise which it can possibly go back to. The word "raised up" meant "cause to be born". (see Acts 3:22 and Mt. 22:24) This is not in any way a reference then to the resurrection which is taken up in the following verses. Some trinitarians have tried to say that verses 32 and 33 is a figurative reference to the resurrection. They say this to establish that if the word "begotten" in Ps.2 can be figurative of the resurrection it might also be figurative for the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father.

The second Psalm, verse one is disastrous to the Trinitarian position which teaches the eternal generation of the Son by the Father. The verse says "THIS DAY have I begotten thee."

In verse 34 the transition is made to proof for the resurrection of Jesus. It says, "But as for the fact that He raised Him from the dead no longer destined to return to corruption, thus it stands written: 'I will give to you (plural) the sure decrees of God relating to David (Bauer 589)!' " verse 35 "Therefore He says in another place, 'You will not allow your holy one to see corruption.' "

The first prophecy apparently is directed to the Jewish nation since the you is plural and could not refer to Christ alone. The verse (isa.55:3) is probably used to introduce the second verse (Ps.13:10). The idea is perhaps that God has promised to give the Jews the certain promises to David. One of the most important of these is the promise not to let Christ see corruption. (This verse was used by Peter on the day of Pentecost.)

In the following verse (v.36) he points out, as did Peter, that David died and therefore could not be the one referred to in the verse (Ps.13:10).

In In verse 38 Paul puts the finishing touches on his sermon. He says, "Let it be therefore known, men and brethren, that through this man remission of sins is being proclaimed to you, even from all the things which were not possible by the law of Moses you can be made clear, by this man everyone who believes can be made clear (innocent)".

This was indeed good news to the sin conscious Jew who had to go up year after year to the temple to obtain partial remission of sins. This is the first time on record of justification by faith being preached. We of course know that the converts of Paul were not oriented to a passive "believism". (cf. Acts 19:5,6)

At the end Paul drops a gentle warning to his audience. He says "Look out therefore lest what stands written in the prophets should happen to you. 'Watch out, you scoffers, be astonished and make yourselves scarce, for I am working a work in your days, a work which you would not believe if someone explained it to you.' " The quotation is from Hab.1:5. The "work" was apparently the coming of the Babylonians who destroyed the nation.

Many followed Paul and Barnabus. (v.43) Note that in Cyprus it was Barnabus and Paul (13:7), but from then on (13:13) it was the other way around. The Cyprus campaign brought out those qualities in Paul which made him a great leader. Barnabus instead of getting jealous and quitting like some moderns, accepted Paul's new position.

Note that they exhorted them to remain in the grace of God. This was indeed a strange message if no one can fall from grace.

On the coming sabbath almost all the city turned out to hear. This possibly means all the city with religious leanings towards monotheism. The Jews were filled with the same fanatical zeal that had so motivate Paul a few years before. Not being able to meet Paul's arguments fairly, they said many hard things against him.

Paul and Barnabus replied that they were going to turn to the gentiles who were a more worthy congregation. (v.46) This verse is a high light in the book. Not only are gentiles accepted as converts but now ministers have vowed to make them their primary objects of preaching.

Paul thus identifies himself with the "servant" in Isa.49:6 which he cites as authority for his decision. "I have placed you as a light to the nations so you can be as salvation to the ends of the earth." When the gentiles heard of this they rejoiced and glorified God. "And" the Bible says, "all who believed were classified among those possessing eternal life." (v.48, see Bauer p.813 on tasso) The KJV reads "ordained to eternal life", but this is merely a statement that they were saved as Bauer's lexicon translates it.

The word of the Lord prospered throughout the region. The more the word grew, the madder the Jews got. Finally they instigated a persecution against them among the leading citizens of the city. Like many modern Pentecostals they were asked to leave. In accordance with the directions of Jesus they shook the dust off their feet as a witness against them. They left and went to Iconium. This was to the north in Galatia and may have been one of the church to which Galatians was addressed.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Return

Iconium (vss 1-5) They spent a considerable amount of time here. Many were converted. This is the first point in Paul's ministry where any statement about signs and wonders is made (v.3). It was the same story as in Iconium. The Jews stirred up trouble for them among the people. They heard rumors that the crowd intended to do them harm so they fled to Lystra.

Lystra (vss 6-20) There was a man there who had never walked. Paul saw as he preached that the man had "faith to be healed". This is strange in view of the fact that some tell us that healing has nothing to do with the amount of faith a person has. Paul would never have believed this. If he hadn't discerned faith in the man, he would not have bother praying for them, and the Jews

would have accused him of "culling" out the hard cases. (Just as do some moderns who say they are ministers in the Church of Christ.)

"He said with a great voice (some would have thought him over-emotional) Stand up on your feet straight!" (Some manuscripts add "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ") The man leaped up (some would have thought him too emotional.) and walked.

One would think this would bring revival. But it actually confirmed the Lyconians in their pagan faith. They wanted to sacrifice to them. (In verse 14 Paul and Barnabus are both called apostles on equal terms. This refutes teaching that there can be only 12 apostles. In fact Barnabus' name comes first.) In the face of this upsurge of pagan worship they rent their clothes and rushed into the crowd to reason with them.

(The fact that verse 11 says they spoke in Laconic indicates that Paul had probably been preaching in Greek. He did not use the gift of tongues, as far as record goes, to preach sermons as everyone understood Greek in these areas.)

They cried, "We are men of the same nature as you who are declaring the good news to you to turn from those vanities to the living God." (v.15) He goes on to explain that this one God is creator of all things. "In times gone by", he said, "(God) allowed all the nations to go in their own ways." (v.16) This should not be taken to mean that there were not certain things that He did not hold them responsible for (cf. Rom. 2:14) This rather means that God did not directly interfere in their affairs or give them a written set of rules for worship.

Although God did not give them a written revelation, there was what theologians called a general revelation (see Rom 1:20) (for a denial of this see Berkouwer's General Revelation) They owed to God the rain and the air which they breathed and the success of their crops. There were some pagans which recognized this. Their audience, however, was so steeped in paganism that they were barely able to keep them from sacrificing anyway! (v.18)

Jews, which were formerly Paul's brethren, were constantly causing trouble for Paul. (see I Thes. 2:14,15) Somehow Jews coming from Antioch and Iconium were able to stir up the crowd against Paul to such an extent that he was stoned and taken for dead. V.19 would indicate that this was only an opinion of the crowd. In no place does it say that Paul actually died. After recovering he went to Derbe which was just a little ways a way. We do not know much about Paul's success in Lystra. In Acts 16:1 we are told of a church being there. Timothy was well known in Lystra and it may have been his home. In no case was Paul's ministry here a failure.

Paul's ministry in Derbe is passed over in a single verse. He proclaimed the good news and made many disciples. (v.21) The same verse tells us that they retraced their steps back to Antioch possibly bypassing Cyprus. They were making the souls of the disciples "firm" as they went. (episterizomai) (They did this by exhorting them to remain in the faith. They were repeatedly doing this contrary to the popular theology which tells us that the righteous cannot leave the faith. They warned their converts to remain in the faith because "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God." (v.22)

If they had to go through much tribulation to get to the kingdom of God, there must have been a sense in which the kingdom was a future event. Many take it that the kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God are separate. They teach that the kingdom of God is the Holy Ghost experience and the kingdom of heaven is the future millennial reign. If this be the case perhaps we should translate "dia" as "during" and have it read "during much persecution"... Whatever the case may be it is obvious that Paul was telling them that persecutions might cause them to leave the faith.

As they went by each church they appointed or "elected by raising of hands" (see Bauer on cheirotoneo, p.889) elders in each church. If Paul and Barnabus appointed the elders, this may not be a precedent as these were not established churches and had no saints really qualified to decide who was and was not qualified to be an elder. They prayed, fasted and committed them unto the Lord "upon whom they had come to believe" (v.23) There would be far less strain on our leaders if they could learn to commit more things to the Lord and not worry about them constantly.

After a brief preaching stand at Ferga they went down to the port and sailed back to Antioch from which they had started. This ended what is commonly referred to as the "first missionary journey." At Antioch the church had what was probably the first missionary convention (v.27) At this conference they announced to the church how God had opened the door of faith to the gentiles.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: THE FIRST GENERAL CONFERENCE

Occasion of the conference (vss 1-5) Some came down from Judea and taught that one needed to keep the law and be circumcized to be saved. We have today people who lay great stress on the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabus resisted them furiously. This is what the epistle to the Galatians is all about. Paul wrote his churches which he founded on the 1st missionary tour to warn them about what was going on. This was the first doctrinal dispute in the early church. They (Paul and Barnabus) were determined to press the issue to the informal headquarters, Jerusalem. Paul suggests in Galatians that some who were involved in this doctrine were considered leaders in the church. (Gal.2:)

When they got to Jerusalem they were welcomed by the apostles, the elders and the church. They repeated their testimony about how God was working among the gentiles. But not everyone was happy to see them. There was a sect of the pharisees who were Christians and taught observance of the law of Moses and circumcision. This group was referred to as Ebionites in later church history and gradually passed off the scene.

The Conference (vss 6-29)

Peter's Address (vss. 7-11) The debate was hot and heavy. In the course of time Peter stood up. (Note that nowhere is it said that as first pope he presided over the conference. He does not cite any claim here to special authority or rank over anyone else.) After Peter received the Holy Ghost, he channelled his zeal into preaching and was almost always in the forefront.

His only claim to authority in the subject was that he was first to preach to the gentiles. Peter states that God purified their hearts by giving to them the Holy Ghost just like He (did) to US, and put no difference between US and them... (v. 8) Peter did not open his remarks by saying "fellow apostles". He said, "Men and brethren." He addressed the entire congregation. According to verse 12 there was a multitude there. Verse 22 suggests that the entire church was gathered there. Thus Peter states that the entire Christian at that time received the Holy Ghost JUST LIKE Cornelius did!!!!!! (Acts 10:45,46) They all spoke in tongues. It was not a country club experience for a select few. Cornelius was not a SPECIAL case as some who say they represent the Church of Christ tell us. Cornelius' experience was normative and comparable over and over again (10:46; 11:15,17) to the experience which had been received by the entire church. Why should God give Cornelius some wild, odd bizzare, "blue moose" type of experience. Wouldn't it have been more natural for him to get saved like everybody else to be an example.

In verse 10 Peter says, "Why do you tempt God" (the apostles were not the ones, he was addressing the entire church) to place a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we are strong enough to bear." This obviously refers to all the ritual and ordinances under the law. Yet there are still some today who suggest we should still keep the law!

James' Address (vss. 13-21) A brief verse is devoted to the part Paul and Barnabas played. They gave testimony to the signs, wonders and miracles God did among the gentiles. Then James got up and addressed the audience. James indicated that the Scriptures are in support of what Peter has just said. To verify this he quotes Amos 9:11,12. (He says "prophets" because this was the name of the roll in which Amos was included.)

This portion of James is very interesting because it is just

about the only verses in the book which have an optimistic tone. They describe the raising up of the tabernacle of David which has fallen. Perhaps it refers to the resurrection of Christ (cf. John 2:19-21) and the restoration of true system of worship.

See
Barnab.
v. 21/4
A. 118/17
Jam. 2:17

The purpose of this restoration is that "the rest of mankind might seek the Lord and all the gentiles upon whom my name is called." (v.17) "Called" is in the perfect tense in Greek. The perfect tense shows action which began at a specific point in the past by a completed action but the results of that completed action continue into the present. This can only refer to the baptismal formula. This is the only single completed acts during which the name of the Lord (Jesus Acts 9:5) is called over the person. Thus James and Amos were saying that only those baptized in Jesus' name have a right to seek the Lord.

James cites this verse to show that those baptized may seek the Lord but other items such as circumcision are not required. The only requirement is that the "name" be called over them. The only further requirements he gives are that they abstain from "pollutions due to idols (i.e. not slip in any pagan forms of worship), and fornication (moral purity) and things strangled and blood." Some take the word "fornication" and try to get the law back into James statement, but it is obvious from the context he is not talking about ordinances of the law. He would in so doing contradict all that he had previously said! The abstinence from blood is possibly out of veneration for the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Moses has enough preachers," James said. (v.21) He would not make a statement like this if he had just slipped the law of Moses back in in his last statement.

Note that the decision was made by the entire church (v.22). Paul, Silas, Barnabus and others were sent to Antioch to correct this doctrine there. They were given a letter drawn up by the convention. Note that it is as far from the style of later papal bulls as heaven is from hell, and it is not even made official by being signed by the first pope! Note that they did not dis-fellowship the people who were thus preaching, they merely made it clear that they were without apostolic authority.

Paul, however, used much plainer language in Gal. 1:8 concerning these teachers.

The letter ratified the work and message of Barnabus and Paul. The decision is from the whole church and also has the approval of the Holy Ghost. (v.28) The letter was received with rejoicing and was an encouragement to the church at Antioch. Paul and Barnabus remained there for some time teaching as they had previously been doing. Perhaps this was the first missionary furlough.

But the furlough only lasted a few days. The burden for the work was too great. Paul wanted to go back and see how the works were doing (v.36)

Unfortunately this was the first division among the missionaries. Barnabas wanted to take Mark but Paul didn't. So they parted company and Paul went with Silas. When this happens in our midst some take this to disprove the guiding power of the Holy Ghost and even to make our possession of the Holy Ghost questionable. But no one dares to question that Paul and Barnabas had the Holy Ghost. Though we do not have an easy explanation of why Paul could not hear from the Lord on the matter. Perhaps it was God's will that they split up into two teams and not all stay "bunched" up.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Gospel Comes to Europe

Circumcision of Timothy (vs 1-3) Paul circumcized Timothy for a testimony to other Jews. He fought circumcizing gentiles but Timothy was a Jew. Not to circumcize him would be unpatriotic. It would be like not saluting the flag and would have hurt Paul's ministry.

The tour (vss 4,5) To say that there was no organization in the primitive church would be wrong. Vs.4 tells us that they delivered decrees which were ordained by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. This was perhaps the first church manual of discipline. Vs.5 is another one of those reoccurring verses in Acts which tells about the multiplying of the church.

Call to Europe (vss 6-10) They attempted to go deep into Asia (now Turkey) and preach the gospel. The Holy Ghost would not allow them. They tried to go another direction and still the Spirit forbade them. The Greek text says it was the "Spirit of Jesus" (v.9) which was guiding them. Some might think that because there was so much indecision that these men could not possibly be led by the Spirit, but they were nevertheless.

Finally in verses 9 and 10 we have the famous Macedonian call where Paul dreams of a man saying "come over into Macedonia and help us." Macedonia was north of Greece. Note that the second missionary journey begins with a dream while the first one began with a direct command from God.

Phillipi (vss.11-40)

Conversion of Lydia (vss.13-15) Wherever there was a place of prayer one would always find the apostles. The first convert in Europe was made at the place of prayer. Paul is not given credit. They merely did the talking. The Lord opened her heart so that she gave heed to those things which were spoken.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: .

THESSALONICA, BEREIA AND ATHENS EVANGELIZED

Paul had started in Macedonia which is north of Greece. Phillippi was a very ancient, historic city named after the father of Alexander the great. He now made his journey into northern Greece.

Thessalonica (vss.1-9) It was to the Thessalonians that Paul probably wrote one of his first epistles. At any rate reading these two epistles gives one an insight into the love and very deep feeling Paul had for the saints there and the struggle he had in founding this church.

Paul's usual method was to go into the synagogue and reason to the Jews there from the Scriptures. He was able to prove to them that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead (v.3). Paul had a fantastic command of the Old Testament. How many of us today know even a few prophecies about Christ from the OT? Note that Paul did not open a store front and wait for them to come to him. He went to where the action was. He sought out men and women and brought the good news to them.

They gained a number of converts by this methods of reasoning from the Scriptures in the synagogue. Note that it says that they were "joined" to Paul and Silas. We are of course joined to the Lord, but we are still also joined to his ministers. Those who do not desire to be joined to God's man do not have the same faith that those in the book of Acts had. (.4)

The story was always the same. Success was followed by extreme persecution stirred up by the Jews. It is always easy to stir up a crowd. The Jews gathered up a lot of the rabble which always stands around looking for trouble. By the providence of God, they were unable to find Paul, but Jason, his host, paid a heavy fine for keeping him. Many saints groan at helping the preacher, but how many of us would do anything at all if it meant that we might suffer persecution from the police along with our inconvenience?

It was dangerous for Paul. He was smuggled out at night along with Silas. (v.10)

Berea (vss 10-15) The first place they went to was the synagogue. How different this is from the standoffish attitude some of us have today regarding those who differ from them. But Paul did not go just to worship or to pretend as if he and the Jews who all travelling the same road to heaven. He was there to win souls.

The attitude of the Jews in Berea was quite different from the ones he had met with elsewhere. They received the word with enthusiasm. They searched the Scriptures to see if these things might be so. We should have this Berean attitude toward Bible truth. Too often people have the attitude that they could care less one way or another.(v.11)

As at Thessalonica many prominent men and women were converted. When the Jews at Thessalonica heard, they stirred up trouble for Paul.(cf. Jews at Iconium in ch.14) Paul had to go far south to Athens. Silas and Timothy stayed on and labored promising to join Paul in Athens later. There was something about Paul that was particularly offensive to the Jews. Perhaps it was because he had been such a prominent pharisee. Perhaps also he was too important a man to stay in one place.

Athens (vss 16-34)

Paul had apparently been sent to Athens to rest. His feelings are described in chapters one and two of I Thess. But for a man of God there are no vacations. Paul saw so much idolatry there that his spirit was aroused within him(v.16) He began preaching not only in the synagogue but to everyone he met in the market place

Paul's Sermon on Mar's Hill (vss 18-34)

In the course of his preaching he met members of the various schools of philosophy. They desired to hear a full presentation of his doctrine. Some feel that there was an official court in Athens called the Areopagus which heard new doctrines and decided whether they could be preached in Athens. According to Bauer's lexicon the word translated Mar's Hill is "in Roman times the most important governing body in Athens; among its many functions was that of supervising education, particularly of controlling the many visiting lecturers, and it is not improbable that Paul was brought before it for this reason."(p.104)

If one is acquainted with the beliefs of the Epicureans and the Stoics one can see how Paul played one against another and very skillfully presented his message to them. Paul used his knowledge of philosophy here to get a hearing that probably no one else living at this time could have gotten.

Introduction (vss 22-23) Paul starts out with a compliment to them. He says, "I perceive that you are very religious." (This is a better translation than "superstitious") They had an altar to the unknown God. Socrates had been accused of preaching strange gods centuries before. Paul escapes this charge by identifying himself with this altar. He very skillfully starts with the known and works to the unknown. He does not open the Bible. He does not call the one up with the worst cancer and heal him. He just

preaches the word. Why he does not use signs and wonders we do not know. They were probably never more needed, but it does not seem to be God's sovereign will to use them. At any rate the gifts of the Spirit are always subservient to the preaching of the word.

Paul declares the creatorship and lordship of God (vss 25-30). Paul offers no proof for his statement that God created the world and everything in it. He did not need to. The Epicureans believed this. The Stoics accepted the Lordship of the world by God. They were still "amening" him when he said "(God) does not live in temples made with hands neither is worshipped with men's hands" (v.24). Philosophers scoffed at popular, mythological ideas of the Greek world. To protect themselves from offending the populace they constructed an elaborate typology and found symbolical philosophy in the old tales about the Greek gods. The word "served" possibly gets Paul's idea a little better than the KJV "worshipped with men's hands". Ancient Greeks taught that men served the gods and catered to their needs, but God is sovereign as Ps.50 said if He did need anything "I would not tell thee".

Paul says the reason for this is that God gives life and breathe to everyone. The Stoics believed that God or the Logos was the world soul and gave animation and life to everything. The Epicureans believed like the Deists that God was separate from the world and set everything in motion and then stands aloof from his creation. He plays up to the Stoic idea that God is immanent and has an intimate contact with his creation.

The fact that God set that bounds of man's habitation and controls events in history would seem pleasing to the philosophers. (especially the Stoics). That one could seek God and come into contact with something ultimate would also be accepted by some philosophers though they would not agree with what we can seek. That God is so close that we could, so to speak, reach right out and touch Him would also be agreed upon by the philosophers of the Stoic school.

In verse 28 Paul said "in Him we live and move and have our being." This was good Stoic doctrine which they no doubt identified with the 'world soul' they believed in. They must have been saying to themselves, "Boy he's really knocking those Epicureans who think God's way off some where." Paul then quotes the pagan Aratus as saying "We are the offspring of Him." There is an interesting piece of religious liturgy called the Hymn to Zeus which presented many of the ideas Paul was preaching here.

"Since we are the offspring of God", Paul reasoned, "we ought not to imagine Deity to be 'like an idol.' All philosophers present would be able to agree with this. They deplored popular concepts about the gods but were afraid to be very open with their views in some circles.

Presentation of the concept of a day of judgement (vss 30,31)

Paul had been presenting points which were generally agreeable to his audience. He is using the same technique Stephen used and that he had used with the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia in chapter 13. He has said all this to communicate and make his audience receptive to what he has to say in verses 30 and 31. He has been using the laws of persuasion in a masterful way. He has identified with his audience. He has gotten them thinking with him and following what he is saying. But no one can do this unless he understands his audience. No one but Paul could have preached this sermon.

Paul is now presenting a new doctrine to his audience. "God overlooked this ignorance", says Paul. The KJV translation "winked at" is farther from the original. He now commands all men everywhere to repent. That God is a person separate from the world who can say something apart from what man says would be accepted by the Epicureans but not the Stoics. He suggested this view in his opening remarks. He has been playing one group of philosophers off against another throughout his sermon.

God is an actual person not a philosophical principle like the Stoics thought. But contrary to the Epicurean view he is a person in intimate contact with the world, and a person who makes exact demands on his creatures. He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. The stoics had a rigid system of ethics but could not accept a personal God sitting in judgment. Moreover He is going to do this by a "man" (v.31) This word suggests an actual human being. It does not say, "Jesus, the eternal Son, the second person of the Godhead." It is the man, Christ Jesus. (I Tim 2:5) Since He was tempted in all points like as we are (Heb.4:14ff.), He is qualified to judge us. God has demonstrated the certainty of this by raising Him from the dead.

Paul has taken his audience very slowly and carefully up to this point. Each point of reasoning in his sermon has lead a little further toward the fact that man will stand in judgment. He did not spring his punch line on them all at once like some do. It was not "slam-bang" all the way through. But he did not follow the example of some by preaching only peaches and cream and saying only what his audience would agree with. Some are so afraid that they will offend their audience that they seldom preach any real doctrine.

Outcome of the Sermon (vss 32-34) The Greek mind could not accept an idea of resurrection from the dead. They detest all forms of matter. That man's body would live again was unacceptable to them. They taught that the body was the prison of the soul. Resurrection was a step backward for them. Some mocked and others said they wanted to hear more about it.

Nevertheless Paul was free to preach. The council did not convict him of preaching dangerous doctrines. Some did believe. This was amazing. It would be like if today someone would go before the American Association of University Professors and get a group of converts.

Some of these people became prominent in the church. We can never judge the results by numbers. Dionysius, probably one of the judges, and Damaris are the only converts of Paul who are actually named besides Lydia and Timothy. Tradition has it that Dionysius evangelized all of France. At any rate they became well known to the church or they would not have been named by Luke.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

REVIVALS IN CORINTH AND EPHEBUS

Aquila and Priscilla (vss 1-3) Paul found some Christian Jews in Corinth name Aquila and Priscilla. They had lately come from Rome. Claudius had expelled the Jews there. The Roman historian Suetonius says that Claudius expelled the Jews because of some riots caused by "one Chrestus". Perhaps this was a riot against Christians there like in the book of Acts. Some of the Jews at Pentecost were from Rome and may have gone back and founded a church there (cf. Acts 2). This is no doubt where Paul heard of them and perhaps where he got information for writing his epistle to the Romans.

Early Failures (vss 4-8) Paul used his usual technique of preaching in the synogue. He was encouraged by the coming of Silas and Timothy, and so he doubled his zeal. But zeal will not always get the job done. Paul became exasperated with them and said that "from now on" he was going to the gentiles. He moved to a house next door to the synogue. This was probably the first case of Paul using a building besides the synogue. Break through (vs. 9, 10)

Paul had been very discouraged. He thought God was through with the Jews. He thought there would never be revival there. He was wrong. He had gotten into the flesh. Just at this very point there was an amazing breakthrough. The leader of the synogue, Crispus (I Cor. 1:14) got saved and pulled many members out with him. We are not told of the details of this conversion. Perhaps the words of Paul just kept sinking in and growing.

The Lord gave Paul a dream (v. 9) in which He encouraged him. He told him He had much people in this city. Paul, like Elijah, had begun to think he was practically the only one. Paul needed a renewed vision of souls being saved. Paul stayed over a year and a half. This is longer than he had stayed any other place.

Opposition (vss 12-17) Sometimes God uses sinners in strange ways. The Jews drag Paul to the judgment seat. It was one of the few times they had ever really got their hands on him. It seemed as though his dream had been wrong. This was one of the times for a person to "stand still and see the salvation of God." Before Paul could open his mouth the governor threw the case out of court and the Jews were beaten in front of the governor who had a convenient case of blindness.

Priscilla and Aquilla at Ephesus (vss 18-28)

Paul returned to Syria. On the way he stopped at Ephesus and reasoned in the synagogue there. Though they requested him to stay he left and made a tour through the churches he had brought in on the first journey and eventually visited Antioch on his journeys.

While Paul was gone a very eloquent Jew came to Ephesus name Apollos. He was mighty in the Bible. Note that what he did have was recognized. He was declaring the way of the Lord. He was very zealous and had a lot of enthusiasm. But this was not enough. He even taught about Christ, but understood only the baptism of John. *We have many today who understand only the baptism of John. Denominations today teach about Christ, but don't have or understand the full truth.*

Priscilla and Aquilla took him aside and expounded the way more perfectly. When he left and went to Greece they gave him a letter of recommendation. He probably went to Corinth. (I Cor. 1,2) He was a great help there. He could show in a very plain way the Scriptural prophecies about Christ. He was a very good speaker and minister. His conversion shows that it is very important to have a correct knowledge about doctrine, especially baptism.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

FURTHER REVIVAL AT EPHESUS

Eventually Paul did, as he had promised, returned to Ephesus. The first seven verses tell us about the conversion of saints at Ephesus. They are the only verses which actually tell us anything about converts at Ephesus. We are not told whether Paul actually converted people in 18:19 or whether believers from elsewhere had come to Ephesus.

[These opening verses tell us how saints in Ephesus came into the church. Many today want to go to verses like Ephesians 2: 7,8 and preach salvation without doing anything except a passive believism, but they forget Paul in his epistles is writing to people who are already saved. The books of Acts tells us how converts came into the church at Ephesus and is the place to go to find how to get saved. Paul would not tell people who were

already saved how to get saved all over again! There is no better commentary on Eph. 2:7,8 than Acts 19:1-6. Whatever Paul meant in the epistle we may be sure that it did not contradict his methods in the book of Acts.

Paul made good his promise to the Jews (v.21) and returned to Ephesus. There is no evidence that any real break through had been made at Ephesus. The only convert recorded was Apollos, but he had gone to Corinth. When Paul returned he found "certain disciples" (v.1) By the term "disciple" we are evidently to understand that these were seekers after more truth about the Christ.

Apparently these people had accepted the Christ which John the baptist had preached though they had no definite information about Him. The normal question to ask "professing Christians" was, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since (or when) you believed?" This would be an unusual question if the Holy Ghost were an unusual experience available only to a selected few. Vs.2 seems to read as if this is something which all Christians and one by which one could test the validity of someones experience.

On the other hand if the Holy Ghost is something so vague and abstract that you can't even know whether you've got it or not, then this also is an unusual experience. One religious leader is quoted as saying that "I have the Holy Ghost, but I could not know it unless I had read that when I got baptized I automatically have it." Why didn't Paul say, "How were you water-baptized?" Why did he ask them about something they couldn't know whether or not they had except by reading about it in a New Testament which they did not yet have???? The Holy Ghost must have been something they could know whether or not they had or Paul would never have asked that question!!

Probably we should supply the words "given" or "available to all" to their reply as is done in John 7:39. "We have not so much as heard whether or not the Holy Ghost is available." Any Jew knew about the Holy Ghost especially one that had followed John the baptist. The Jews believed that when the messiah came the Holy Ghost would then be once again available to Israel.

Those who teach a "Holy Ghost by faith" experience would have to say as the KJV, "We have not so much as heard (perieved) whether there be any Holy Ghost."

Their answer that they had not received the Holy Ghost raised a question as to the nature of their water baptism. Acts 2:38,39 teaches us that when someone is baptized in Jesus' name he is entitled to receive the Holy Ghost. If you can't know or tell whether you get it during water baptism, then Paul should have asked, "What have you been taught about the Holy Ghost and water baptism?"

Some have suggested that Paul is not talking about water baptism here. But converts of John would most easily understand the question to be a reference to water baptism. They would be more likely to be thinking in those terms. Paul would not have confused them by introducing typical, figurative meanings of "baptize". To do so would not have been helping them to see the light and grasp more clearly the Christian message. Paul would never have used a figurative, spiritual terms to new converts without first explaining it.

Moreover the Eunuch's words "Here is water" in chapter 8 and Peter's words "Who can forbid water make it clear that water was associated with believing and receiving the Holy Ghost. Moreover the disciples replied, "Unto John's baptism." This indicated that they had understood that Paul was speaking of water baptism. If Paul was referring to Spirit baptism he should have set them straight right then and there, but his reply does not contain a single word about Spirit baptism.

Paul said, "John administered a baptism which resulted in repentance saying to the people that they should believe on the one coming after him, that is on Jesus." (v.4) If someone believed in Christ, he would not refrain from accepting the kind of baptism administered by his agents. (cf. Acts 2:38)

"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (some manuscripts add "Christ for the remission of sins.") The words "in the name" are only used of Christian baptism (Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:46-48). They are never associated with spiritual baptism as in I Cor. 12:13. They are never used with John's baptism nor are they used with immersions under the law. Therefore it is clear that they are referring to a spoken formula used during NT water baptism. It was the words "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" was the only thing which would make Paul's baptism different from John's baptism, pagan immersions or washings under the law.

But for those words they were getting the same baptism John gave them. There was no other difference. If they believed John's preaching, they believed in Christ when John baptized them. John's authority was from heaven. He acknowledged Christ as His superior. Surely he baptized in Christ's authority. Certainly he did not baptize without it!!!! If John baptized believers in Christ in the authority of Christ (certainly not with it!), then what would be the difference between John and Paul's baptism except for a spoken formula.

Verse 5 says "And when Paul laid hands on them the Holy Spirit came on them, and they were speaking in languages and prophesying." This of course is a parallel situation to Acts 8 where the Samaritans had been baptized with water and then after hands were laid on them by the apostles and they later received the

Holy Spirit. The fact that they spoke in tongues proves that the apostle had been referring to a supernatural measure of the Spirit which he expected all believers to receive if their baptism was the right kind. If believers today do not receive this kind of experience they should either check their repentance or their baptism.

Paul's Ministry at Ephesus (vss 8-12) As elsewhere the Jews in the synogogue were particularly obstinate so Paul had to move. He spent two years in the school of one named Tyrannus disputing daily with anyone who would enter into discussion with him. Since Ephesus was a very large religious center everyone living in the Roman province of Asia had a chance to hear Paul's message. The Roman province of Asia probably covered what is now modern Turkey and is not to be confused with the continent.

While Paul was here God wrought very unusual miracles. Healing clothes were brought from his body to sick people and they were healed. It does not say Paul prayed over these, though praying over clothes and using them for a point of contact when it is impossible for the minister to come is not out of line with the principles of faith outlined in the NT. This was not the usual. It was a case beyond general practice (v.11) They did not charge for the clothes, nor was there an advertising campaign to promote the use of these clothes.

The Seven Sons of Sceva (vss.13-20)

For every genuine working of the power of God there is a Simon Magus and seven sons of Sceva who want to get into the act. The papyrus clearly shows that magicians of the day were very interested in magic words and names. In their spells they used every name they could think of any religious significance and invented some which no one had ever heard of. The sons of Sceva attempted to add the name of Jesus to their repertoire of magic.

But the demon did not "know" them. He had no reason to fear these Jews. They were not disciples and thus had no claim to the mighty promises behind the name of Jesus. The demon knew they were not disciples. This should make us fear to wander from the fold. The demons know how close to the Lord we are, and when we dabble in the world we lay ourselves wide open to the influence of demon power.

These men were beaten, but not before the demons testified, perhaps unwittingly, to the power of Jesus and the truth of Paul's message. They were not allowed to say that there was no power in the name. They acknowledged that there was no power when the user did not know the Lord. This had an amazing effect on those who practiced black magic. They burnt their books. Bauer tells us that the cost of these books was about \$10,000 dollars. (p.531) Converts today would probably be counselled to sell these books and pay their tithe to the church (!!).

The Riot at Ephesus (vss 21-40)

In the New Testament idol makers were being put out of business. There is a well known church which, if it had really been in existence then, used so many idols that they would have really made business "boom" for the idol makers. Instead of rioting at their convention, they would have voted a vote of thanks to this certain church for the extra business they had given them in perhaps ordering several thousands statues of the blessed virgin and a few hundred other saints.

This riot shows clearly what little can be done without organization. Some cried one thing and some cried another. Some did not even know why they had come together.³²) The town clerk was wise. He had more wisdom than some Holy Ghost filled saints. He told them if they had a real, legitimate complain, they should take it through the proper channels if they really wanted the matter dealt with.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Macedonian Tour and Paul's Farewell Address to the Ephesian Elders

Macedonian Tour (vss 1-16)

Paul went back through some of the churches which had been brought in in Greece and Macedonia. It was at this time some feel that Corinthians and Romans were written. We know from some of the Corinthian material that Paul was probably taking an offering which he planned to take with him to Jerusalem.

As he left he stopped by Troas. It was here that a lad named Eutychus became an imortal example to those who sleep in church. In these modern days this probably would not have happened as most of the saints would have left Paul standing at ten o'clock.

From Troas Paul went to a city near Ephesus. He called the Ephesian elders and addressed them there to save time as he wanted to be in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost.

Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders (vss 17-38) This discourse gives much valuable advice for minister and saint alike. Paul lays down many valuable principles for ministers. Ephesus evidently had a very large church and needed more than one pastor. There is no evidence at all that these elders were equivalent to board members. Paul's pastoral epistles, Timothy and Titus refute this idea.

v.19 Paul says that all the time he was there he was "in a state of slavery to the Lord with humility and tears...." This is quite a contrast to some modern ministers who are interested in salary and fringe benefits more than souls. The word for humility here comes from the word "carpet". The humble minister lives under the carpet instead of swinging from the chandelier.

Paul did not hold back anything profitable from them (v.20) This is different from some churches who hold back the gifts of the Spirit which are clearly for profit and edification according to I Cor.12. Paul taught them publically and from house to house. The most glorious of all ministry is in the home. The words "house to house" occur a great deal in Acts and are an important part of the apostolic ministry.

In verses 22 and 23 Paul announces his intentions of going to Jerusalem. He states that the Spirit witnesses that bonds and imprisonment await him. God was getting him psychologically prepared for this great trial. This clearly shows a unique use and value of the gift of prophecy and word of knowledge and underscores its need for today. Would knowledge of coming trials be of use to us? Then gifts are still needed.

Paul says, "In no way do I make my life . . . precious to myself so that I can complete my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord." (v.24) This should be a golden text for all ministers and saints alike.

In verse 27 Paul says, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the council of God." This shows Paul knew all the council and declared it to the church. Therefore "that which is perfect" in I Cor.13:10 cannot be the council of God but must be the coming of Christ.

"Take heed to yourselves..." Many ministers forget to take heed to themselves while they are watching the flock and thus many tragic events take place which have wrecked some ministries beyond repair. "and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers." Jesus is the chief shepherd (I Pet.5:3) He then must be the Holy Ghost who sets up the overseers. The word "overseer" is "Episkopos" which means bishop. The pastor was a bishop. There was not a bishop as an official ecclesiastical office distinct from the pastor. Though there were men whom Paul appointed to take charge of and direct the work of pastors. (see episles of I Tim and Titus).

They are to take heed to "shepherd the church of God which he purchased with His own blood." (v.28) This indicates that a pastor ("shepherd"), elder and bishop are one and the same office. The phrase "church of God" simple is a statement that God owns or is the originator of the church. Paul is not here

giving instructions about what name to put on their church sign. There is no evidence that they had church signs. There are no directions given for making them, nor is there any rule against them. It is our own business what we put on them. We usually put what will tell people immediately what we believe. This is the function of a church sign. The sign is not intended to tell who owns the church or who founded it. "Which he hath purchased with His own blood" can also be translated "with the blood of His own," i.e. Christ.

Verses 29 and 30 prophecy of the beginning of the great apostasy. Even some of their own number would become "greivous wolves." Paul had worked night and day for three years trying to establish them in sound doctrine. This had cost him many a tear.

[He now committed them to the word "which is able to build you up (establish you) and give you an inheritance among all those who are set apart." Some teach that when the church was established gifts ceased. They teach when the word, the IT, came the church was established. Well the verse here teaches us that they had enough word then to establish them and the gifts still did not cease!

In verse 35 Paul indicated that he had worked for a living while among them. This does not mean that he did not believe in ministers taking money. They can be seen from I and II Cor. (cf. II Cor. 9) Paul preserves for us here an interesting quotation from Jesus which is not in any of the gospels. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Thus he ended his message to the elders.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE: Arrest at Jerusalem

In verse 4 Paul finds certain disciples who "were saying to him through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.". In verse 10 a noted prophet, Agabus (cf. 11:27ff.), met Paul. He demonstrated to him that he would be bound in Jerusalem. But Paul was determined to go anyway. He had told the Ephesian elders that he was "bound in the spirit" (v. 22 of chapter 20) He is willing, he says to even die in Jerusalem for Jesus' name (v. 14). This is certainly unusual determination which caused Paul to flaunt these warnings and go anyway. Perhaps some of the things which happened to Paul would never have happened had it not been for this stubborn streak. In general, however, we may say that his imprisonment was in the will of God.

Some might think that the long imprisonment which Paul had to undergo was a great waste. This is not true. If it had not been for this confinement, we would probably not have, for example the great prison epistles. Paul, in general, wrote much deeper epistles when he was in prison than when he was out.

The brethren greeted Paul with great hospitality. There had arisen, however, a misunderstanding that Paul taught the Jews to live like gentiles and to reject national customs. This was untrue. Paul attempted to disprove it by fulfilling temple ritual to the letter (vss. 22-26) with regards to entering the temple.

This was not compromise with Paul. [The temple ritual now represented not a necessity for Paul but abiding by it was a "patriotic" thing to do. It was being a Jew to the Jews (cf. I Cor 9). Not to honor temple requirements and to enter in such a way as to appear defiled would be like not saluting the flag or even like perhaps burning the flag or walking on it. No true apostolic will participate in any act which is disrespectful to the government nor will he break known laws as long as there is no clear breaking of Scripture involved.]

Moreover if Paul wanted to come out of the temple alive, he would honor the customs. Archeologists have discovered an inscription from Herod's temple which states that any gentile proceeding beyond this spot will be responsible for his death which follows. There was a fanatical Jewish sect called the "zealots" which used assassination very frequently as their modus operandi. These zealots would be in the temple and probably would be carrying concealed weapons. The inscription was official notification that assassinations of gentiles in the temple would not be prosecuted.

However, despite Paul's careful precautions, it was mistakenly thought that he did bring a gentile into the temple. Paul's precautions are a witness against some church members who will go door to door (or even sell peanut brittle) without first securing a permit where one is required by law.

In light of this inscription to which we have referred which shows the attitude of authorities toward such matters it is indeed amazing that the Roman officer saved Paul from the crowd. (v. 32)

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

Paul Addresses the Angry Mob

Paul had nerves of steel and didn't seem to know what danger was. He had just been snatched from the jaws of death. Hobs in Jerusalem were nothing to play around with. This is a very unique and ironic situation. Paul was in exactly the same position in which he had seen Stephen years before.

Paul, despite his negative remarks about his speaking in I Cor. 2, was a master orator. He began by identifying with his audience. He marked off point after point which they shared in common. He even commended them for the zeal they were showing for what they

believed to be the truth (v.3). Ministers who are so coarse and crude that they are not even interested in the bare fundamentals of persuasion and audience psychology are not truly apostolic if apostle Paul is a qualified model.

Paul uses this avenue to present his testimony to the mob. A sermon without some personal application will not be as likely to influence the audience. It might appear at first glance that there is a contradiction between Acts 9:7 and 22:9 which says "they did not hear the voice of the one speaking to me." Actually "voice" and "sound" are the same words in Greek. The men with Paul may have heard some sounds which they were unable to distinguish as a voice.

Note here again in v.10 the Lord told Paul, "Go into Damascus and there it shall be told to you what is commanded for you to do." Here again visions are not put over the word of God given by a God appointed man. Those who think they do not need to listen to God's man because they have had a vision of the Lord did not see the same Lord Paul saw. (see comments on chapter 9) In verse 15 Paul was told he would be a witness of those things which he both saw and heard. Personal experiences and the word go hand in hand. Those who are so busy with experience they never talk about the word have an unbalanced spiritual adjustment.

In verse 16 Ananias says, "And now what are you waiting for? Get up and get baptized and get your sins washed away by having His name called over you." F.F. Bruce, the great Greek scholar supports this view in his commentary on Acts. There is what Greek scholars refer to as the "causative middle". The causative middle means "to have something done". Any Greek grammar in discussing the middle voice will bring out the causative middle. "Baptize" and "wash" are both causative middles. These were not things Paul would do himself. He would have them done to him by someone else. It seems reasonable, therefore, that the third verb in the middle "call over" is also a causative.

This is made doubly certain in view of the fact that Paul had already been calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 9:5,12) Ananias was not telling Paul to pray. Jesus had told Ananias that Paul was already praying. (Acts 9:12) He had been praying and fasting for three days (Acts 9:9), therefore Ananias could not have been telling Paul to pray. The only other possible explanation must be that he was telling Paul to get the Lord Jesus' name called over him in baptism! This was the only thing Paul was commanded to do.

After telling of Ananias' visit Paul skips across three years and tells about his return to Jerusalem. The mob listens to his vision. But when they tell him that Jesus, the Lord told him He was sending him to the gentiles, they became furious. In fact they became so furious Paul had to leave under police escort.

Personal Experience
Does Count

Apostles were eye-witnesses
of the resurrection - no longer doubted
Still needed Gifts of Spirit
Today we witness baptism
or, if we get past that
baptism - need gifts

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

Paul's Defence Before the Sanhedron

Paul was a bit "craftier" than Stephen. He knew exactly how to manipulate his captors. When he tried to present a similar introduction as in ch.22 he was smitten. He did not turn the other cheek. Instead he called the man a "white-washed wall" or a hypocrite. Paul pointed out that it was illegal for him to be examined in this way. They were dealing with a man who knew the law inside out. When he found out this was the high priest, he knew opinion would be against him so he apologized and quoted a passage from the law to justify his apology.

This respect for the law would stand him in good stead with the pharisaical element of the council. Then as he had played the Stoics against the Epicureans at Athens (ch.17), he put the Pharisees against the Sadducees with the cry: "Concerning hope of the resurrection of the dead I am being judged."

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, but the pharisees did. This caused an argument to arise between these two groups. This made the Roman officer nervous so he took Paul away again.

What the Jews could not accomplish by due process of law, they hoped to accomplish by means of secret assassination. This would not be the first time something like this happened. It would be to the advantage of the Romans to look the other way and be rid of this troublesome guest. However, the murder of a Roman citizen would probably not have been taken lightly by those higher up the line. Nevertheless it is to this noble officer's credit that he looked after Paul's welfare in such a splendid way.

A nephew of Paul's discovered the plot and informed, at Paul's request, the Roman officer. And so Paul was smuggled out at night to the Roman governor at Caesarea. In this way the providence of God was sparing this key man in God's program. This should encourage us to know that no matter how much the forces of Satan scheme and plan to destroy our walk with God that we are serving a God who never sleeps and who knows all things.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

Further Attempts Against Paul by the Jews

The Jews attempted to bring in a trained orator. They knew that they were not dealing with an average opponent. But what they did not know was that Paul's Lord had said, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries shall be able to gainsay or resist."

The golden words of Teryllos were no substitute for the evidence which he lacked so Paul was not convicted. However, he was not given his freedom. Such a move would incite undue wrath among the Jews. Paul was too dangerous to release. Also Felix hoped that some of Paul's friends might raise money for a bribe, but such was not the case.

Felix was mildly interest in listening to Paul. He called for him many times but made no overt response. After two years Festus became governor and followed Felix' policy of keeping Paul bound.

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE AND TWENTY SIX

Paul Brought Before Festus and Agrippa

Vss 1-12 Paul appeals to Caesar. The Jews could not prove their charges nor could they figure out a way to assassinate Paul. Rather than going to Jerusalem to be judged he appealed to have his case heard before Caesar. This was a clever move. The Roman government would have almost had to recognize Jewish sovereignty to deny his request.

Vss 13-27 Festus Consults With Agrippa. At this time the government of Palestine was highly complicated. There is scarcely a kind of history which is more difficult to follow than that of the intertestamental and New Testament period. When Herod the great died his kingdom was divided between various people who used the name of Herod. Agrippa was such a kinglet.

Since Festus was at a loss for advice in the matter, he invited Agrippa to hear the case. It was also a matter of a strange bizarre case which was extraordinary to the extent that it probably provided some entertaining value.

Paul's Speech (26:1-23) He begins by explaining about his past life and of his fanatical persecution of the Christians. Verse ten says he cast his vote against them. The original Greek implies that the voting was done by means of pebbles, a white one for innocence and a black one for a guilty verdict. "If taken literally", says Dr. Tenney, "this implies that Paul was a member of the sanhedron." In view of Paul's sense of guilt which he felt (cf. Rom. 7) his fanatical persecution of the Christians may have been an attempt to do something for God to try to make up for this sin.

In the rest of his sermon Paul talked about his conversion and of his vision of Christ. In Christ's initial words to Paul he suggests that in his fanatical zeal he has really been running from the call of God. "It is to kick against the ox goad.", Christ said to the apostle to be.

Paul's version of his conversion emphasis his call to the ministry. This would explain his behavior and his actions and why the Jews hated him so violently. Paul was selected to open their eyes, to give them light, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of satan unto God, to take them remission of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified.

Besides repentance Paul states that he taught his converts to do "acts worthy of repentance." (v.20) Paul did not restrict his repentance to an inward, passive "believism". He taught the people that there was something to do.

(After Festus heard Paul he said, "You're much learning has made you mad." Festus was like many modern day critics of the Pentecostal experience. Deprived of Scriptural arguments they resort to psychological arguments to discredit modern day speaking in tongues.)

The facts, however, were more stubborn than the outward scoffing of these kings. "this was not", says Paul, "Done in a corner!" Agrippa was not convinced. His words should be translated, "In a few words (or such a little time) you are trying to persuade me to be a Christian" (v.28) To this Paul made one of the most noble answers in history. He prayed that they would be like him except for his bonds.

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN AND TWENTY EIGHT

Paul's Voyage to Rome

Paul's Warning of Danger Ahead (vss 1-11) The twenty seventh chapter of Acts is one of the most difficult in the Bible as far as the original Greek is concerned. It is difficult, that is, unless as Dr. Berkeley Michelson says, "You are a reincarnated Greek sailor and are acquainted with the nautical terms."

God gave Paul favor with the ranking officer in his guard, a man named Julius. This "favor" was to save Paul's life later in the trip. In the initial part of their voyage they experienced some difficulty. Finally they arrived in a place called "fair Haven" (v.8). Paul seemed to have a premonition that the trip would be unsafe. The navigator and the steersman advised contrary to Paul and their advice was heeded by the centurion.

The Violent Storm (vss 12-27) There was such a violent storm that they had to throw the cargo overboard. This reminds us very much of the book of Jonah. But this time there is no Jonah on board. It is God's will for Paul to go to Rome. It was part of a fulfillment of the prophecy made to him at the time of his conversion. The men on the ship were so anxious they did not even eat. Although Paul could not resist saying "I told you so", he gave them a wonderful message of comfort in the midst of the storm (v.24)

Paul said in verse v.24 so he related to them what the angel had said to him that they should take courage. He had seen an angel of God "whose I am and whom I serve." The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Paul, you must stand before Caesar, and hey, God has given you all those who are sailing with you."

What a contrast this was to Jona. Paul is their only chance of survival. God's purpose will be done. Paul must stand before caesar. This "bull headed" determination Paul has of going before Caesar and bringing him the gospel should be an inspiration to all of us who enter into the work of God. We should not be afraid to meet obstacles head on. The only thing that matters is that the will of God and the work of God go on.

Verse 25 shows Paul's simple child like faith. He says, "For I believe God that it will be exactly like it was spoken to me." If we could only capture this simple faith. Paul was convinced that it could not be any other way. Each gigantic wave which almost threatened to break the ship in two seemed to be another piece of evidence that Paul was wrong. But Paul did not hear the waves. The only thing he could hear was the angel saying "don't be afraid."

As we travel on the rough seas of life and as the signs of the times cry out that this old ship which we call the planet earth is about to break to pieces, there are other signs which say that the sea is not as deep as it was and that we are nearing the shore. (v.28, v.29) But even the signs of land were ominous to the sailors. Land meant there were rocks near by. These rocks might at any moment tear the ships underparts to pieces sending them to an almost instantaneous death.

So they let down their anchor and prayed for the day to come. We too have an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast (Heb. 6:19) In the storms of life we can let down our anchor and we too can pray for the day to dawn with the coming of the great God and our savior, Jesus Christ.

Some were fearful. They wanted to get out of the boat. They wanted to let down the life boats. We, too, have men who are crying that the church is about to break apart on the rocks. We are told that in order to go on with God we must desert the ship. But we have one in the ship who can with but the words coming forth from his mouth still the waves. Paul said (and his advice is still good), "Except (ye) remain in the ship, ye can in no wise be saved."

This time Paul was taken seriously. The life boats were cut. This is what we need to do in these troubled times. We need to see that every bridge is burnt behind us. This seemed to be the most foolhardy thing that men could do. Faith sometimes seems to go against our very instinct for survival. It is more important

for us to believe God than it is for us to live. Paul said in Phil. that our lack of fear and our showing of faith when it seemed all hope was lost was to our enemies "an evident token of perdition (i.e. that we have "lost our labors")" (Phil 1:28) "But," Paul says "To you of salvation."

In verse 33 Paul told them to eat. They would need their strength for the conflict ahead. In these troubled times in which we are living we cannot afford to go on long spiritual fasts and not take nourishment from God's word which may save our souls! For this", says Paul, "shall be to your salvation."

After they ate they threw that grain into the sea. They were, so to speak, stripping down for the race. We, too today must cast out everything which could be to our personal advantage. How many times do we hear people say, "I have to take an extra night job so we can live though it does take me out of church." This, it is not difficult for the spiritual man to see, is not faith talking! There are many things which we must consecrate, dedicate and give over to God. There are many things to be cast aside which are not wrong. There was nothing wrong with grain, but it was an extra weight!

Verse 40 is a real study in their faith in what Paul had said. "And they cast off the anchor allowing it to go into the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes which held the rudder, and hoisting the foresail they were heading for the shore propelled by the wind." They put themselves entirely at the mercy of God. No way to steer, no way to stop themselves, they made for the land. All too often we think we need to have everything all worked out. We take every precaution imaginable and leave nothing for faith.

The ship caught hold on a sand bar and broke. Paul's life was spared when the guards were prevented from killing him. It was a serious thing for a Roman soldier to let his prisoner escape. It was a great show of confidence in Paul that the prisoners were kept alive.

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

PAUL AT ROME

Paul on the Island of Malta (vss. 1-10) It is just like the Lord to turn a near tragedy into a great evangelistic campaign. The incident concerning the viper in v. 4 is the only example of someone taking up a "deadly thing" or a serpent. It was not apostolic practice to handle snakes for exhibition. Those who teach this are not apostolic and are adding to the Word of God. They are certainly adopting methods which no apostle would ever have thought of!

Men were watching Paul. He did not know it. (vss 6,7) How many of the Lord's servant have met with the viper of sin. Those watching expect that they will make the same response that anyone else would make and succumb to the temptation. It is a saving witness when we do not swell up with the curse of sin but go through the temptation unscathed as did Paul. They changed their opinion. They thought Paul was a God. Paul needed a verbal testimony then to set them straight. Miracles without the word will do nothing more than exalt the flesh or worse.

This opened the door for Paul to pray for the father of Poplios. This opened still another door and there was a great healing ministry on the island. We are not told, but we know from Paul's methods in other places that this included the preaching of the word.

Arrival at Rome (vss 11-16) Paul's hopes were finally realized. (see Rom. 1:10,11) There were brethren there to meet Paul. Though it does not mention the alleged pastor of the church, Peter. This greatly encouraged Paul when he saw them coming to greet him. There are no men so great that they cannot profit from the fellowship of brethren of like precious faith.

Audience with the Jews of Rome (vss 17-31) It is to the credit of the Jews that they gave Paul audience. They stated that every where this sect is spoken against. Unpopularity was not then and still is not a good criteria to judge your doctrine by.

Paul persuaded them daily from evening till night. They had mixed feelings. Some believed. Others did not. Paul summed up their unbelief by quoting Isa. 6:9ff. Those verses were quoted by Jesus and also by John. (Matt 13:14; John 12:39-42) The words were to the effect that God had hardened their hearts because they were not worth saving. He announced to the Jews at Rome, as he had at Corinth, that "This salvation of God is sent to the gentiles, and they will listen." (v.28)

The book ends with Paul in jail but still preaching. We are never told how he made out with Nero. Tradition tells us that he had one more missionary journey and was thereafter captured and beheaded by Nero somewhere around 65 A.D. II Tim. is Paul's last epistle right before his death.

There are various explanations as to why the book ends like this. Some say that Luke wrote this as a sort of an "apology" answering why Paul was in jail. It was thus intended as evidence to strengthen his case before Caesar. Others say that this is volume one and that Luke intended to write another edition. A very important approach to this problem is that the works of Acts is still unfinished and that we today are writing new chapters to the book each in his own way. The fact that it ends so abruptly is a rebuke to the doctrine which teaches

that the period of Acts is a special miraculous dispensation and is now ended, finished and closed. If the miracles and the message of Acts is marked off as belonging to a special dispensation, there is little explanation left which is satisfying to a high view of the Bible.

Those who teach that the period of Acts was a special closed dispensation are closing what God has left open by this abrupt ending to the book!

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